



THE INDEPENDENT

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For six years we have been campaigning against the scandal of abuse in children's homes. Today, at last, there is a hope they will be safe



After years of scandals, inquiries and investigations into child abuse, hope at last emerges for the thousands of children trapped in children's homes without protection. Today, the Government will be urged to rethink its whole residential child care policy.

"We need vigorous rehabilitation of residential care, clear and consistent rules and modernisation of foster care. The Government, local authority managers and staff must be continually vigilant against abuse," says Sir William Utting in a 200-page report which has taken nearly a year to produce.

The report, which calls for a range of new measures to protect children at risk, comes more than six years after reports in *The Independent* and *Independent on Sunday* uncovered the North Wales child abuse scandal.

Following a long campaign by the two newspapers, the last Tory government set up a judicial tribunal of inquiry into abuse at the North Wales homes in the 1980s and the Utting inquiry into failings in the national system of residential care. The report to be published today by Sir William, a former head

of social services inspections in England and Wales, contains 20 major recommendations which are expected to set new standards in childcare.

It presents a picture of a care system where runaway children were often returned to their abusers, where young people who alleged abuse were not believed, and where youngsters still face bullying and intimidation.

Children are moved around too often because there are insufficient homes for them, and young people are still at risk from abuse.

**EXCLUSIVE
BY ROGER
DOBSON**

Some children's homes are still not regulated, some youngsters receive poor or no education, and homes are plagued by chronic staff shortages.

Sir William's report:
● Urges the Government to legislate to regulate private foster care following the boom in these agencies over the past five years. There has been concern that these agencies

should be subject to regulation which would involve detailed vetting.

● Calls for children's homes with fewer than four residents, which currently escape regulation under the Children Act, to be brought into line with larger homes. There are thought to be about 140 of these type of homes. Sir William says children in these homes may be at risk and that they should be regulated.

● Urges the Department of Health and the Welsh Office to set up a specialist group to develop a childcare strategy for residential care.
● Urges local authorities to secure more residential and foster care facilities. It says that too many children's homes have been closed leaving social services departments with too little choice when placing young people.

The report says residential homes are an important option for children in care but that the numbers have shrunk to stages where there is not enough choice. It says that the lack of choice leads to inappropriate placements, not suitable for the children concerned. As a consequence, children are moved too often, that they are not happy where they are placed, and in some homes vulnerable children are mixed with "fearsome" children, exposing them to bullying and intimidation.

The inquiry was set up at the same time as the North Wales tribunal into abuse at homes in Cwyl and Gwynedd, and the brief

was to look at the current safeguards to see if they are the most effective possible to protect children from abuse, and if those safeguards are being enforced.

The report says that disabled children and those with behavioural problems are the most at risk because they are less likely to be believed when they make allegations. Sir William adds: "One of the worst features of past scandals is that children who ran away were continually returned to the abusers care."

His report will be followed next year by the finding of Sir Ronald Waterhouse's judicial tribunal which has been investigating abuse at homes in North Wales. It too is likely to make recommendations about the future of residential care.

In recent years residential care, once the main provision for children, has been in decline. A series of inquiries and police prosecutions involving abuse in the Seventies and Eighties have added to the poor image of residential care and hastened its demise.

But there is an emerging view that properly supervised residential care, possibly with a national inspectorate overseeing standards and behaviour, might be the best form of provision for vulnerable children. Smaller homes, with more highly trained staff and part of a national strategy, with individual specialist homes, might, some believe, be the answer.

Photograph: John Lawrence

INSIDE TODAY



Never mind Swampy give me a fast car
5/YOUNG BRITAIN

Office bullies: how to get your own back
CITY+

Aromatherapy: men on the scent of good health
CITY+



Yo-Yo Ma: the Cello is just child's play
THE EYE

TODAY'S NEWS

Doctors urge law to help patients use cannabis

The British Medical Association urged the courts to show compassion when dealing with people charged with cannabis offences in the light of evidence of the drug's medical benefits.

The body said there was evidence that the drug could help muscle spasm and pain in multiple sclerosis patients, and nausea in patients undergoing chemotherapy. Page 7

Diana talks with Costner

Diana, Princess of Wales held talks in the weeks before she died with Kevin Costner about starring with him in a sequel to his hit film, *The Bodyguard*.

Costner received a second draft of a script just three days before Diana's fatal accident. The script called for her to play a princess driven to hire a bodyguard because she thought the paparazzi was threatening her life. Column One, Page 2

Three generations wiped out in Egyptian massacre

Tourists of all nationalities flew home from Egypt yesterday after Monday's massacre which left 58 holidaymakers dead. Six Britons died when gunmen opened fire. Esther Leach reports that one family was all but wiped out.

The grief was raw in the Yorkshire village of Rippenden. The sole surviving member of the Turner family, Deborah Turner, 30, left their home under the protection of a friend and a police officer soon after she was told the news.

"I am absolutely distraught at losing all my family," she said. "I'm all alone now."

Her air-hostess sister, Karina, 30, Karina's five-year-old daughter, Shaunnah, and her mother, Joan, were all shot dead.

Deborah, a mature student at Salford University, Greater Manchester, where she is study-

ing to become a social worker, said: "I've lost my mother and my sister and my beautiful niece."

"I'm absolutely distraught. I've lost everything." They had lived together in the village. The holiday had been arranged through Karina's firm.

John Wilson, whose daughter attended the same school as Shaunnah, said he did not know how Deborah would cope with

the loss of her family. "Shaunnah was a bright, beautiful little girl who went to the same school as my daughter," he said.

Shaunnah was at St Mary's Church of England junior and infants school, near by at Mill Bank. It was the task of Danny Mollan, head teacher of the school, to tell his 87 pupils the news at the end of the day.

Children left the hillsides

school hand-in-hand with parents, some wiping away tears, trying to understand what had happened.

Then Mr Mollan made his own statement to the press. He said: "Shaunnah was a lovely, friendly, popular little girl who is going to be greatly missed. We would be grateful if the children who have been told of Shaunnah's sad death and the school could be given the opportunity to come to terms with the grief that we all feel at the moment."

Earlier in the day PC Mick Holroyd, who stood outside the Turner home protecting Deborah from unwanted questions by the press, said she was completely distraught. He added: "She will be for a very long time. You have just got to do the best you can at the end of the day."

Another neighbour, who refused to give his name because he was so clearly upset, said: "I've got a young daughter myself. This is worse than any road accident. If this is all about religion then you can keep it."

Premonition of doom, page 8

HOLIDAY FIRMS MAY STAY

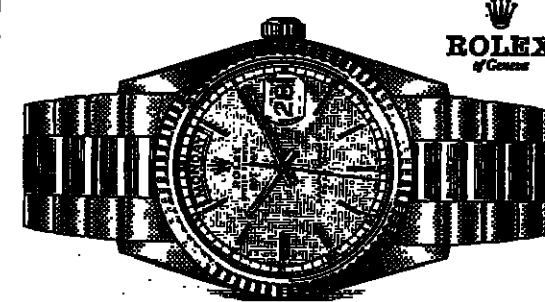
It was not clear last night how many of the British tourists in Egypt had taken advantage of the offer by tour companies of immediate flights home.

Keith Bexton, a spokesman for the Association of British Travel Agents, said that some people seemed happy to stay and it was unlikely that all tours will be cancelled immediately. "Tour companies will want to assess matters over the next 48 hours before deciding whether to pull out completely," he said.

The Foreign Office has issued a travel warning, saying: "Luxor is reported to be under curfew and visitors are advised to avoid the area. In all parts of Egypt, visitors should be vigilant and respect any advice from the local security authorities."

Egypt's tourism minister put on a brave face. "Were you able to prevent bombings at the World Trade Center or Oklahoma City?" Mamdouh el-Beltagi asked an American reporter.

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TELEVISION The Eye, page 12
CROSSWORDS Page 32 and the Eye, page 9
WEATHER The Eye, page 10
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COLUMN ONE

Diana was planning to become a movie star

Remember the "big surprise" that Diana, Princess of Wales, was promising to spring on the world just before her untimely death in Paris in August? We have all since thought it was about Dodi. But perhaps it was about Kevin.

Yesterday brought us this extraordinary revelation. In the final weeks of her life, Diana was holding secret talks with the actor Kevin Costner, about starring with him in a sequel to his Hollywood hit, *Bodyguard*. Mr Costner should get some award for keeping his mouth shut for so long. He has, however, finally spilled the beans in an interview with *Premiere* magazine in its January issue which hits the stands next month.

What it affords us is a tantalising glimpse of what might have been for Diana in a post-Windsor life. It also suggests a kind of morbid reverse symmetry with the life of Grace Kelly. She went from actress to princess and, of course, was killed in a crash. Diana's crash intervened too soon.



The interview, seen yesterday by *The Independent*, shows that the project had got well beyond the stage of speculation. Indeed, Mr Costner received a second draft of a script for the film just three days before Diana's fatal accident. He put off reading it and then she died.

He told *Premiere*: "I picked it up and the first 30 pages were totally her. It was dignified, sexy, smart, funny. And I couldn't finish. I stopped. It broke my heart".

The secret of the first *Bodyguard* was providing its co-star, Whitney Houston, with a role so close to her real life that little acting talent was required. She played a famous singer who acquires a protector - Costner - and falls in love with him.

The Diana movie would have attempted the same magic. She was to have played a princess stranded in Hong Kong and driven to hire a bodyguard because of a conviction that her extraordinary fame - and the attentions of the paparazzi - was threatening her life. She too was to succumb to Costner. What title the film might have had, if not *Bodyguard II*, was not discussed. How about this, however: *Hong Kong Holiday*, after that old classic, *Roman Holiday*, starring Audrey Hepburn, a princess who goes incognito in Rome and hires herself to a dashing journalist played by Gregory Peck?

— David Usborne, New York

PEOPLE



C4 actor stays in character to play sleazy MP

It is a casting director's dilemma. You need someone to play a slimy, grasping, untrustworthy Tory MP who is swamped in a tide of sleaze and finds a former foreign correspondent running against him in the general election. Who would you say with such typecasting?

Step forward Robert Duncan, better known as Gus from *Drop the Dead Donkey*, the slimy, grasping, untrustworthy manager in Channel 4's satire on TV newsrooms.

Mr Duncan is to star in *Mr White Goes to Westminster*, a full-length satirical film for Channel 4's winter season based on the goings on in Taitton in May. It covers the election and subsequent rise to power of former foreign correspondent, Ben White.

The tarnished MP, known here as Paul Madison, is opposed by white-suited former hack Bill Patterson. Mr Madison's formidable and naughty Tory wife is played by Celia Imrie. The film is written by Guy

Jeskin, one of the writers of *Drop the Dead Donkey* and follows similar topical satires about escaping prisoners and slippery home secretaries.

Other highlights of Channel 4's winter line-up includes extended celebrations of the channel's 15th anniversary with some imaginative packaging of repeats. In *Storm Over Four*, the programme-makers and journalists involved in outrage stories about Channel 4 offerings such as the *Red Light Zone* and *Brookside* recount the media controversies created by the press.

In *Fantasy Schedule*, viewers will be able to vote for their favourite evening's programming from a shortlist of different *Brookside*, *Cutting Edge*, *Cheers*, *Friends*, *Drop the Dead Donkey* and *Father Ted* episodes. Other nostalgia trips will include a live reprise of *The Last Resort*, the programme that was to blame for making Jonathan Ross famous.

— Paul McCann

Restaurateur loses case but keeps reputation

In the midst of legal defeat, restaurateur Michael Bloom yesterday claimed his name has been cleared of something unthinkable for a man in his position - deliberately stocking non-kosher meat.

Mr Bloom, pictured, who is now unemployed, ran the eponymous Bloom's Jewish restaurant in the East End of London until a religious court removed his licence, or *kashrut*, as a kosher food provider. The London Beth Din - court of the chief rabbi - took the action after non-kosher meat was found in the restaurant's fridge two years ago.

An aggrieved Mr Bloom later discovered that the meat had been left in the fridge by a delivery driver, a fact known by the Jewish court's judge, but ignored. Accordingly Mr Bloom sought judicial review in the High Court to overturn the Beth Din's verdict, a challenge which yesterday failed, saddling him with a £70,000 legal bill, his licence still revoked - but satisfied that his public honour had been restored.



After the hearing, Mr Bloom, of Finchley, north London, said: "I am extremely disappointed in the outcome of my application for judicial review, but the judge has recognised I clearly had grounds for a genuine sense of grievance".

Mr Justice Lightman, said he recognised Mr Bloom's grievance, but said the Jewish court had been entitled not to disclose the delivery man's confession.

Mr Bloom, who had wanted a completely new hearing for his case before the Beth Din, can now take up an invitation from the original judge, Dayan Elmentreu, to hear the delivery man's evidence.

Bloom's, once frequented by Princess Margaret and film stars, closed in February last year after losing £500,000 in four years.

— Michael Streeter

UPDATE

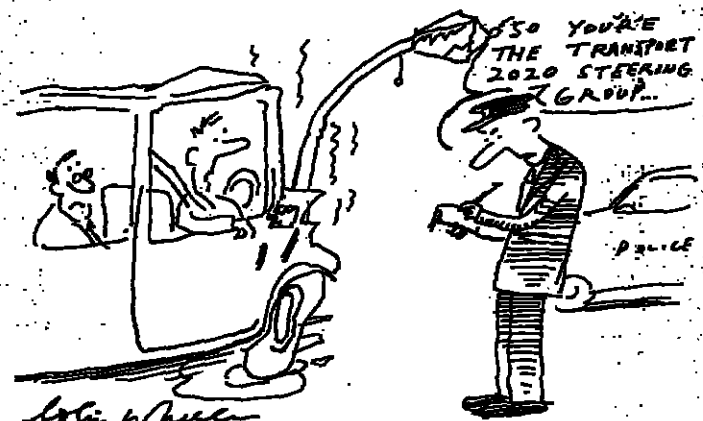
TRANSPORT

Technology promises safer roads

New technology will dramatically cut road deaths and solve transport congestion problems, says a report out today. By 2020, pedestrians could even be equipped to photograph an attacker and relay the picture to the police.

Hi-tech systems will also lead to a "railway renaissance", said the report produced by the Institution of Civil Engineers on behalf of the Engineering Council. Entitled *A Vision for Transport 2020*, the report predicts and recommends:

- Collision-avoidance systems for cars and speed-limiting electronic devices on cars
 - Closed-circuit TV cameras in each street to combat crime
 - Better transport links, including improved access to ports
 - Improved walking and cycling facilities
- "There certainly is a mass of transport problems as we look towards the year 2020 and we need to act to stem these problems," said Professor Tony Ridley, chairman of the steering group which produced the report. "We could develop our society in a way that is less dependent on motorised transport. We have the techniques and technologies."



HEALTH

Fibre blocks bowel cancer gene

Scientists at the Cancer Research Campaign have shed more light on how fibre may help prevent bowel cancer, it was revealed yesterday.

Experts have believed for some time that fibre helps prevent cancer by speeding up the transit of natural waste products through the body. This new research, carried out with colleagues in America, demonstrates at cell level how a naturally-produced substance derived from fibre can block the activity of a cancer-causing gene. This, they believe, has significant implications in the prevention and treatment of the disease, the second biggest killer cancer which currently claims the lives of 18,000 people in the UK each year and hundreds of thousands world wide.

Teams from Bristol University and the Burnham Institute in California have found that a substance called butyrate, produced when fibre is broken down, can halt the activity of a gene that causes bowel tumours to develop.

ENVIRONMENT

Asbestos not as risky as believed

A new study into the use of asbestos materials and man-made mineral fibres in homes shows there is little risk to health if managed and treated correctly. The study, *Fibrous Materials in the Environment*, looked at the risks from environmental exposure to asbestos and man-made mineral fibres at home. It was commissioned by the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions.

The report, published yesterday, found that everyone is exposed to low background levels of asbestos and man-made mineral fibres in the environment without an apparent risk to health; and that exposure to asbestos fibres in homes and other buildings where asbestos materials are present and in good condition is not normally significantly different to that from background exposure and is therefore not a cause for concern.

Spruce bark beetle

In a report entitled "Danger beetle sneaks in" (11 October) about the discovery of spruce bark beetle in a shipment of wood at a timber yard in Woking, the quote from Mr Burgess, head of the Forestry Commission's plant health division, should have read: "This is a straight case of deception by an unscrupulous exporter in the Czech Republic".

CONTENTS

Arts news	3	Theatre	18
Young Britain	5	Fashion	19
News	6	Features	20
Health	7	Obituaries	21
Egypt	8	Leader, Letters	22
Middle East	9	Comment	23
News	10	Business	24-28
Politics	11	Sport	29-32
World news	12	Crossword	The Eye, 9
European news	13	Weather	The Eye, 10
Environment	14	TV & Radio	The Eye, 11-12

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BBC vacancies after reshuffle

The BBC is looking for new editors for the *Today* programme, the *Nine O'clock News*, *Newsnight* and *The World Tonight* after kicking a host of editors up stairs to become 'super editors' in the latest reorganisation of the Corporation's management.

The plans have been watered down since they were first unveiled in September. At the time, a list of presenters such as John Humphrys, James Naughtie and Anna Ford released a letter of opposition to the plans.

BBC Director-General, John Birt, put the changes on hold and negotiated with staff. A features 'super editor' post that would have eaten into individual programme budgets was scrapped.

— Paul McCann

7.30 FOR 8



ZITS



IN TOMORROW'S INDEPENDENT

**On the tiles:
bathroom of
the future**
FEATURES

**Derek Deane takes
a Nutcracker to
the Royal Ballet**
THE EYE



**The degree
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**Which musical
instrument is best
for your child?**
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High kicks and class in a women's jail

First Night: Chicago
Adelphi Theatre, London
Review by David Lister

The obituaries for the West End musical have been premature. Last night saw the return of the feelgood show, complete with a great score, first class performances and ticket touts doing a brisk trade outside. It was almost like old times.

Perhaps, as the showbiz cliché has it, timing is everything. Chicago is not a new show. It actually first appeared in 1975, but was quickly overshadowed by *A Chorus Line*, and made few waves. But now, after a year which has seen a lack of blockbuster musicals and a need for a feelgood factor, this revival helped by a massive marketing campaign, has come just at the right moment.

Some of the publicity would leave you wondering if this was a pleasant comedy musical (it is) or a satirical, academic treatise on Chicago mob life in the twenties, women's prisons and the O.J. Simpson trial. (It isn't). Mind you, in the court scene when one of the murderesses was on trial and seduced the jury into finding her not guilty as cheerleaders with pom-poms sang in delight, one did have fleeting memories of O.J.

The musical, by Fred Ebb and John Kander, who also composed *Cabaret*, is set in a women's prison, looking rather more like a night club, and is about a group of murderesses/adulteresses who get song and dance bookings outside as their criminal notoriety rises. After garnering a clutch of

Tony awards on Broadway, there were fears that the British version, led by the epitome of suburban Englishness, Ruthie Henshall, could come unstuck.

Such fears were unfounded. Miss Henshall as killer turned singer Roxie Hart is a revelation, cool and sexy with a beautiful voice matched by assured comic timing. "I started fooling around," she confides to the audience. "Then I started screwing around, which is fooling around without dinner." Her rival in the show is played by Ute Lemper, internationally famous for her smoky renditions of Kurt Weill. As she and Henshall trade high kicks with the rest of the cast, the stage a mass of legs and cleavage, this is more like a night at the Folies Bergères than a show ostensibly set in a prison.

Meg Johnson, who plays the matron Mama, may not be well enough known to get her name above the titles, but she brings an eye-catching suave to the role and her lament with Lemper for a golden age when there was Class was one of the evening's showstoppers.

There was an ovation too for Henry Goodman, a wonderful piece of casting as Mr fix-it lawyer Billy Flynn — "I don't want to blow my own horn but if Jesus had lived in Chicago and had \$5,000, things would have turned out very differently." The scene where he runs a press conference with Henshall on his knee mouthing the words as he sings them ventriloquist style, is a comic highlight, though why people around me murmured the name Max Clifford I can't imagine.

There is one major caveat



Just for kicks: Ute Lemper plays Ruthie Henshall's rival

Photograph: Geraint Lewis

on a highly enjoyable night out. For some reason the orchestra is on the stage, taking up more than half of the space, leaving the action in front of it looking cramped and occasionally more like a concert rendition

of a musical. That leaves one thinking the show could have been even better given the scope of a full stage.

But this did not seem to bother the celebrity audience, including Lord and Lady

Archer, Sir Peter Hall, Marie Helvin and Max Bygraves. From the Adelphi they moved on to a themed party at a studio in Kings Cross, sharing the feelgood factor with audience, cast and ticket touts.

Awards reflect fashion for more reasoned rhyme

The prestigious Paul Hamlyn Awards for Artists have been presented to five poets. David Lister suggests that the five chosen represent a move away from attempts to make poetry young and trendy.

Their styles range from freeform to highly formal sonnets. Their ages range up to 70. Five poets last night received the Paul Hamlyn Foundation Awards For Artists worth £15,000 each.

The choice of the five signalled a move away from the deliberate trendy marketing of poetry in recent years through projects such as Young Generation Poets, and awkward attempts to make youthful poets part of the fashion scene.

The five chosen are established and highly-regarded poets, but in some cases writers who have not been in the limelight. One, Elizabeth Jennings, 70, lives in a B&B in Oxford.

The winning poets are: John Agard, Roy Fisher, Kathleen Jamie, Elizabeth Jennings and Barry MacSweeney.

Judith Palmer, literature officer at the South Bank Centre and a member of the board of the Poetry Society, commented: "There has been a feeling among older poets that they have had the worst of all possible worlds. They were writing before poetry was fashionable. Too old to be Young Generation Poets they were unable to participate in the new rock n roll."

"It's great to have a list of winners that includes people who don't hang out, aren't among the London in-crowd earning their living from book reviews, but ply their craft — and get very depressed about it."

John Agard, 48, born in Guyana has been described as "an outstanding luminary of

DAILY POEM

Get Down Ye Angels

by John Agard

*Get down ye angels from the heights.
Try a few of earth's numinous delights:
the orgasmic rustling of the grass.
The wind's brazen feather licking your arse.*

*Exchange your robe even for a day
with the raiment of one made of clay.
Lay down your harp and dig these pipes I play.*

*I'll put my lips to the weeping reeds
ill temptation thrills the heart of every hill
and the very stones begin the dance of leaves
as if stones had gained a fluttering will.*

*Welcome ye cherubs to the carnal hubbub.
Take a break from heaven's eternal monotone.
Inhabit the splendid risk of flesh and bone.*

Our Daily Poems until next Tuesday will feature the recipients of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation Awards for Artists, worth £15,000 each, which this year have been given to poets. The winners, announced yesterday from a shortlist of 20 after 340 eligible entries, are John Agard, Roy Fisher, Kathleen Jamie, Elizabeth Jennings and Barry MacSweeney. *Get Down Ye Angels* comes from John Agard's new collection, *From the Devil's Pulpit* (Bloodaxe, £7.95)

the exploding galaxy of West Indian-British troubadors". Roy Fisher, 67, writes poetry most often associated with the post-industrial landscape of the Midlands. Kathleen Jamie, 35, from Scotland, was one of the New Generation Poets, and often writes in Scottish dialect. Elizabeth Jennings, 70, writes sonnets and other verse striving to come to terms with losses. Barry MacSweeney, 49, from Newcastle, was an investigative crime reporter and writes poetry described as "unsparing of allusions, and bitter and comic in its self-appraisal."

Poets had to apply to be considered for the awards and 342 did so — a number that may reflect the need for funds as much as for fame.

For the awards come at the same time as a survey by the

Paul Hamlyn Foundation of poets' incomes. It shows that the pre-tax income of a successful, published poet in the UK or Ireland with an average age of 48, is about £12,500 a year — well below the national earnings average.

The survey is based on the earnings of these 342 poets. It found that average annual earnings range from £7500 in the North-west to £14,500 in the Midlands and Scotland. Poets in London earned on average £12,358.

The poet Adrian Mitchell, who was one of the judges of the award, commented: "We commemorate our poets in Westminster Abbey when they're good and dead. Meanwhile their successors are struggling — against neglect, illness and poverty, to survive."

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WIRELESS
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It's hard to swim when you've been running for three hours.

On average, a stag hunt lasts 3 hours and covers around 12 miles.

When the stag is finally caught by the hounds it is at the point of total exhaustion.

Scientific analysis of blood samples taken from hunted stags reveals a litany of suffering.

In the early stages of the chase, glycogen and blood sugar levels fall sharply.

As the hunt progresses, fatty acids in the blood rise, indicating high physiological stress levels.

Red pigment in blood plasma increases, caused by ruptured blood cells.

In the later stages of the hunt, high levels of muscle enzymes appear in the blood, indicating life-threatening muscle damage.

Despite its name, stag hunting is not confined to the male of the species.

Hinds are hunted too, sometimes when they are pregnant or with a calf at heel.

Stag or hind, the end is the same. A free wild animal is hunted to death.

The RSPCA has long campaigned against all hunting with dogs.

In areas where deer need culling it is more efficient and more humane for them

to be shot by a marksman.

We believe that the hunting of wild animals is cruel and unacceptable in a civilised society.

And the vast majority of the people in this country agree with us.

A Private Member's Bill seeking to ban hunting with dogs comes before Parliament on November 28th.

A MORI poll taken in October 1997 shows that 73% of people support the Bill. We want to turn that overwhelming weight of public opinion into legislation.

The 28th is a Friday when many MPs will be back in

their constituencies.

We want you to persuade them to stay in the House and vote to end this cruel 'sport' once and for all.

You can write to your MP direct at the House of Commons, or call the RSPCA on 01403 223284 (9-5 weekdays) and we'll send you a campaign pack.

And if you need further motivation, look again at the stag in the picture.

Look him in the eye. And tell him you can't be bothered.



Ban hunting with dogs.

THE AIMS OF THE RSPCA ARE TO PREVENT CRUELTY AND PROMOTE KINDNESS TO ANIMALS.



5/YOUNG BRITAIN

THE INDEPENDENT
WEDNESDAY
19 NOVEMBER 1997
5

Forget about Swampy. All they want is their own car

You think they are the eco-warrior generation, with Swampy as their hero. You think they plan to save the planet with their politics. In fact young Britons idolise the car.

The notion of a youth movement actively involved in environmental issues is stripped away in 2020 Vision, a survey of 10,000 young people aged between 12-25, exclusively previewed by The Independent every day this week.

BY NICOLE VEASH AND JACK O'SULLIVAN

2020 Vision for the Industrial Society agrees, saying although the young are environmentally aware, they are not doing anything about it.

"The environment is not top of their list and it's definitely below either health or education. Most people know about the environment and are aware about the issues... it's just that they don't take responsibility for it themselves. I suppose they are passively concerned."

So ecological destruction played out in a rain forest thousands of miles away from home, is just too far away to think

valued item, a stereo system, which garnered only 24 per cent. Among non-car owners, 40 per cent would like to own one over and above anything else. The survey revealed that a staggering one-third of all 19 year olds own their own cars.

Jill Patton, 18, from Ballywater, Northern Ireland, says having a car is often something to shout about.

"Having a car is a prestige thing," she says. "Saving a whale is not, while clearing canals is just punishment."

Even though she lives on a farm, Jill says the jargon surrounding the environment is enough to make anyone switch off. "Words like chlorofluorocarbons just turn people off because they are too academic and make it all sound very distant from our daily lives."

The environment is just not trendy enough for much of young Britain. They think it is still the domain of middle-aged, middle-class ex-hippies and rather strange tunnelling people, like Swampy.

And the research shows not only are they not really bothered about the environment, they actually haven't got the time or the money to dig themselves under Manchester Airport, as 24-year-old Tracey Cook, from Bradford, explains.

"If you've got to sign on every other Thursday, hanging around in a tree house is just not going to work. We are too busy getting through day to day life."

"Being involved in the environment doesn't give you any security or finance and that's why most people I know have little or nothing to do with the whole debate," she says.

"But the real problem is older people want us to be responsible, so they can shake off their own responsibilities. So now no one is doing anything about it."

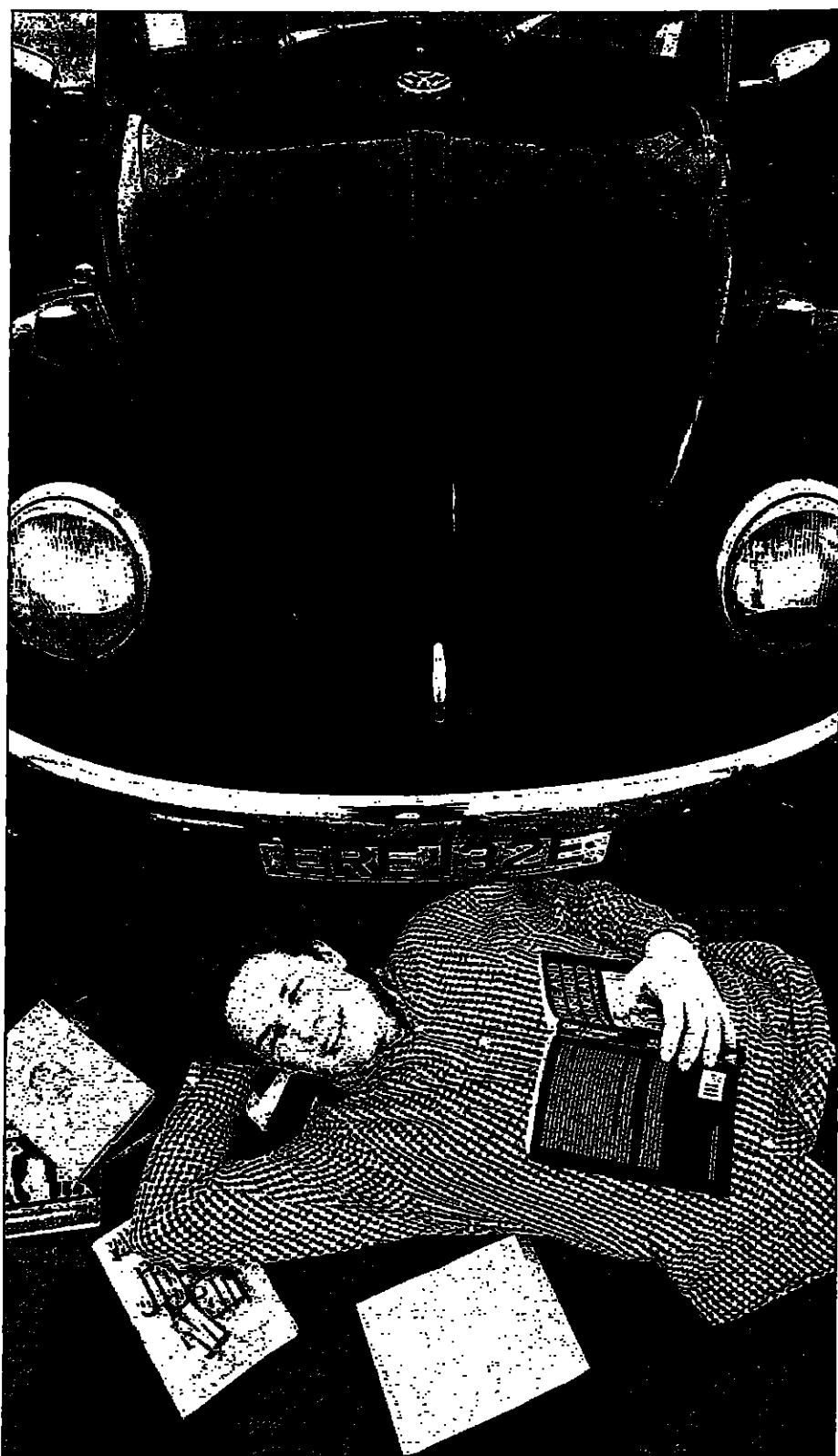
TELL US YOUR VIEW

The Independent welcomes comment or responses to the articles on this page from readers aged between 12 and 25. Please write to Nicole Veash at The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 4DL; by fax on 071 293 2451; or e-mail to n.veash@independent.co.uk. We will publish a selection of views later in the week. If you have missed any of our survey details, they are on our Internet site at <http://www.independent.co.uk>

2020 Vision is co-ordinated by the Industrial Society. The Action Agenda along with full results of the research will be launched next Monday.

about. With this in mind, it is no surprise to find that the picture emerging from the research is of a generation obsessed with having their own cars - content to ignore environmental impact which has no immediate affect on their lives.

When asked which item they valued most, 68 per cent of those who own a vehicle put their car at the top of the list, way ahead of the second most



Top gear: Chris Stewart-Smith and his beloved VW

Photograph: Newsteam

Life in the fun lane begins with your own set of wheels

Chris Stewart-Smith, 19, from Sevenoaks, Kent, is a first year student at Keele University, reading Psychology and History of Crime

I love Beetles. They are my life. I think Beetles are brilliant because they're cheap, they're great fun to drive and people turn their heads when they see one.

I get a lot of attention with mine from both young people who are into VWs and older people who used to own one and want to tell you about it. And it feels good to be noticed when you know that your car is looking good. It is such a buzz.

Cars are very important to young people. They give you freedom and make you upwardly mobile and independent. Having one means you don't have to rely on your parents for lifts anymore. And owning one at my age secures your passage to adulthood.

Where I live public transport is just inconvenient. Buses and trains are unreliable and slow, and frankly, I find them boring.

Having a car means that you can be much more spontaneous, and go where you want, when you want.

When there's not much going on, having a car can provide you with something to do. Cars for young people aren't just a means to an end - they are a form of leisure in themselves.

All of my mates have cars and we just like to go driving. Driving is really exciting and is

a great way of breaking the tedium.

I am concerned about the environment to an extent but I've never really associated my love of cars with that. I recycle my rubbish and so do all my mates, but the environment isn't my main topic of conversation.

Private car owners like us shouldn't be accused of destroying the environment, because it's the industrial lorries that use the motorways the most. If all of that kind of transport haulage was switched to rail then there wouldn't be any need to widen the motorways.

I am concerned about the hole in the ozone layer. If someone asks me if I am concerned then I say yes, but, to be honest, it doesn't occupy my mind much. I did think that people like Swampy and his crew were pretty amusing when I first saw them in the papers. I couldn't believe that any one would go to those lengths rather than write a letter like most people.

But after going on a student march against university tuition fees I realised that the only way that you can get people to notice you is by taking action. Still, I do think that in general Swampy goes a bit too far.

I don't think that it is necessarily hypocritical to be fond of cars and worry about environmental issues. Besides, I think of what I do as a form of recycling.

Some people get rid of their car after five years and buy a brand new one. I buy old cars and then restore them. So really I help to cut down on waste.

- Toby Wiseman

Education hits the right note

THE MUSICIAN

Natalie Clein, 20, was BBC Young Musician of the Year in 1994. She was educated at a girls' secondary school in Dorset and at the Royal College of Music.



"It is important to me that I had a normal, broad education. I did eight GCSEs and sports like everyone else whereas they're down to four or five at some special music schools."

"The interests I developed in school - in reading, drama and art - all keep me sane now that I'm in Vienna playing the cello. I did A-level Classics and English, so, whichever city I'm in, I want to see Greek vases or go to the theatre."

"School gave me a love of these subjects and a belief that education doesn't just stop when you're 18. I hope that

one day, when I have some time, I will be able to go to university to study English or history of art."

"My only criticism of school is that I wish I had learned more life skills. Like knowing how to deal with managers. I wish school had taught me better how to be strong and stand up for myself in some of the difficult situations I find myself in."

Eco-warriors take it too far

THE TV PRESENTER

Cat Deeley presents MTV's Hit Show and is a model at Storm.



"I think people should try and preserve the environment but there really is a problem with the transport system. It's such a nightmare getting anywhere on the Tube and that's why so many young people have cars."

"The older generation are definitely more stuck in their ways when it comes to pollution. They think we are going to do something about the environment because we have been taught about it at school. I learnt quite a lot at school. I knew about the destruction of the ozone layer and global warming, so you could say I'm fairly environmentally aware... I think eco-warriors probably take it all a bit too far. It puts people off

and there is no way my Mum would like me associated with people in those clothes!

"Sometimes there is no point being noisy about issues like the environment because you have got to put your point across intellectually. People like Swampy believe in what they are doing, which is good, but I don't think they are going about it in the right way."

Schools failing to teach about the real world

Young Britons are a generation obsessed with education - its inadequacies and its possibilities for helping them get on in life. But the overwhelming view is one of disappointment - 63 per cent believe that schools do not prepare people for life in the real world, a figure that rises with age.

Francesca Jacobi, 25, from Richmond in Surrey is typical of those who look back with a sense that education let them down. She is unemployed having graduated from Sussex University two years ago in Applied Psychology. "I think school just taught me to go and get a good degree, but didn't say anything beyond that," she says.

University did not do much more in setting her up for the working world. "At university I didn't know where to start in terms of planning a career. And I didn't get much help. I just had no idea what I wanted to do. I went to teach English in the Czech Republic when I got my degree. But when I realised, after coming back, that I didn't want to teach, I felt completely stranded."

Raekha Parsad, 24, an English graduate, agrees. "At least at the comprehensive I went to I had to learn how to compete with hundreds of other kids from all sorts of backgrounds. That was a good preparation for life. At university we were cocooned. When I finished I felt that I was totally lacking in skills." Ms Parsad is now a reporter on the Big Issue.

Educational disillusionment is much higher among those

from poorer backgrounds than among the university-attending middle classes. Only a quarter of those with no formal qualifications felt that school had met their expectations, compared with two-thirds of those who had a degree.

More than four out of five young people think vocational training should start at school. As one 17-year-old unqualified man from Devon on work training told the 2020 study: "You go to school for 11 or 12 years of your life and they feed your brain full of all this shit, which, when you get into a job, you think, 'what's the point in that?' I mean there are things like general maths, but after that you start going into RE and environmental studies, even English. I mean, Shakespeare! It doesn't seem relevant. I've forgotten everything that I learned at school. They're teaching the wrong stuff."

There is overwhelming agreement (90 per cent) that learning does not stop when you leave school, although the majority (55 per cent) blamed poverty for young people not going on to further education. As tuition fees are introduced for students, this figure may alarm ministers who are hoping that the numbers in tertiary education will continue to rise.

Young people regard class sizes to be less important than having an understanding and enthusiastic teacher. Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, under pressure to raise education spending, will, however, be heartened by one result: up-to-date books and resources are a lower priority than good teaching facilities and a wide range of subjects. Good sports facilities generally rank very low, as less important than flexible options for exams.

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TOMORROW: new parents will give their children time

7/HEALTH NEWS

THE INDEPENDENT
WEDNESDAY
19 NOVEMBER 1997
7

Cannabis plea by doctors may not save this MS sufferer from going to prison

Elizabeth Ivof, a multiple sclerosis sufferer, is awaiting sentence after being found guilty of possessing cannabis. Yesterday's move by the BMA to encourage courts to show compassion in such cases may have come too late to help her, reports Jeremy Laurance, Health Editor.

It is seven years since Elizabeth Ivof was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis and in that time she has tried every treatment, orthodox and unorthodox. The only one that has brought her relief is cannabis. Now that may be denied her, too.

On 2 December she is due to be sentenced by the Sheriff's court in South Ronaldsay, Orkney, where she lives with two dogs, after being found guilty of growing 27 cannabis plants on the windowsills of her house. She has been warned to expect a jail term, given the number of plants.

The British Medical Association is supporting patients such as Ms Ivof in calling for a change in the law to allow derivatives of cannabis to be more widely prescribed and research on cannabinoid treatments to go ahead.

Dr Vivienne Nathanson, head of policy, said: "We are not calling for the legalisation of cannabis. But we do believe there is medical evidence that cannabinoids are helpful to justify a change in the law. Until then, the courts should be aware of the medicinal uses of the drug and use their compassion, sympathy and understanding when dealing with patients found in possession."



Numbing down: Elizabeth Ivof says she was 'amazed at the difference' cannabis made to the pain from her multiple sclerosis Photograph: Ken Amer

Six police officers raided the home of Ms Ivof, 50, who walks with two sticks, last September. A van was sent later to remove the plants. She said: "I have tried all the diets, including the crackpot ones, and all the drugs. I had horrible side effects after one course of injections. Three years ago I was given some cannabis for Christmas. I was so amazed at the difference it made I thought this had to be it."

The disease has caused numbness which has left most of her body without feeling. She said: "When I smoked it I

felt the ground under my feet for the first time in years. I only smoke a minuscule amount - enough to ease the pain in my spine and restore the feeling from my bladder so I know when to go to the toilet."

"You cannot believe the difference it has made to my life. It was either cannabis or suicide. I didn't keep the plants secret, my neighbours watered them for me, and I only had so many because I thought some might die. I didn't think the court case would come to anything, seeing my circumstances, but I was wrong."

A report by the BMA's Board of Science, Therapeutic Uses of Cannabis, published yesterday says there is evidence the drug can help muscle spasm and pain in multiple sclerosis patients, nausea in patients undergoing chemotherapy for cancer, and chronic pain in other patients. There are also some reports of benefits in epilepsy, glaucoma (the build up of pressure in the eye), asthma, high blood pressure and the weight loss associated with Aids.

Heather Ashton, professor of clinical psychopharmacology

at the University of Newcastle and chief author of the report said the priorities for research should be multiple sclerosis and chronic pain. "The present treatments are unsatisfactory, new drugs are badly needed and preliminary evidence suggests cannabis derivatives might be effective."

The report did not advocate use of the whole cannabis plant which could be as damaging as tobacco, she said. It was essential to extract the constituents of cannabis that conferred benefit, in the same way that morphine had been

purified from opium, in order to establish which were beneficial. "If you visit any mental hospital you will find young patients who have gone crazy from smoking strong cannabis. Unpleasant mood effects are common in patients with illnesses who are using it."

The Multiple Sclerosis Society said some patients had experienced benefits from cannabis but others had suffered unpleasant side effects, including loss of balance. It called for proper clinical trials to establish whether cannabis derivatives were safe.

URGENT Save the Children Somalia Appeal

Torrential rains are causing catastrophic flooding in the main agricultural areas of southern Somalia. **Already 43 villages are under water, 1,000 people have died and 200,000 people are in need of immediate emergency assistance or evacuation.**

The situation is desperate. Thousands of children and their families are stranded on small areas of high ground. Trapped without food or clean water, severe hunger and diseases such as malaria and diarrhoea are proving a serious threat.

"The floods have ruined everything. Crops and food stocks have been totally destroyed, homes demolished and the infrastructure wiped out." **Anne Mulcahy, Save the Children Somalia Programme Director.**

Worse is still to come. As the heavy rains persist the water levels continue to rise, the flooding gets worse and thousands more families are finding themselves in danger.

The immediate needs are for shelter, food, medical assistance and safe water. Save the Children has been working in the area since 1992 and has been able to respond



Photo: Popperfoto/Reuters

rapidly to the emergency situation. We are there now, helping in the crisis, but we will still be there after the cameras have gone helping children who continue to suffer.

We desperately need your help now so that we can continue to provide relief supplies such as plastic sheeting, blankets, water containers and chlorine for water purification.

£18.50 will provide enough plastic sheeting to shelter a family of six from the rains.

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Money targeted at hospitals with worst waiting lists

Three Thames hospitals with the longest delays in treatment will be the first to be targeted under a Government drive to cut waiting lists. Jeremy Laurance says that as more patients join the queues Labour's pledge to reduce them grows more remote.

Hospital waiting lists rose to a record 1,207,500 in England at the end of September, and they are likely to get worse before they get better, Frank Dobson, Secretary of State for Health, said yesterday.

Using a favourite metaphor, he compared them to a super-tanker that had been set in motion by the Tories and would take time to stop and turn round. "We inherited the highest waiting lists ever in the history of the NHS. Our commitment to cut them will be delivered. It will take time, hard work and patience but we will get there."

A sign of the Government's growing anxiety as it sees one of its key manifesto pledges receding - to cut NHS waiting lists by 100,000 - came with yesterday's announcement of a "waiting-list buster" who will oversee efforts to bring hospitals with the worst records into line.

Stephen Day, regional director of the NHS in the West Midlands, is to chair a waiting-list action team backed by eight regional task forces. Mr Dobson said Mr Day had been selected for his success in cutting waiting lists in his own region but it emerged that it had taken £30m to do it. The team has been given £5m to pilot ways of cutting the lists nationally but further cash will have to come from health authorities' own budgets.

Mr Dobson confirmed that the manifesto pledge to cut 100,000 from the waiting lists

applied to the total at the time of the election in May. He said the lists had risen by 50,000 since, leaving the Government facing a new target of a 150,000 cut in the numbers to realise its pledge.

A start would be made by clearing the 818 patients who have waited over 18 months, in breach of the Patient's Charter standards, by the end of next March, Mr Dobson said.

"It is simply unacceptable that 800 people have waited over 18 months for treatment. No one should wait more than 18 months for treatment and by the end of the winter no one will," he said.

The number of people waiting more than 18 months more than doubled in the three months to September and three London hospitals account for more than half of them. Mr Dobson named them as King's Healthcare NHS Trust in south London, Mount Vernon and Watford NHS trust in Middlesex and Hertfordshire and Hammersmith NHS trust in west London. He said the health authorities covering the three trusts had already received a total of £9.4m. "They have had targeted financial help. Now they will get targeted practical help."

More gloom came from the NHS Confederation yesterday which said a survey showed more than half of health authorities expected to end the year in debt, despite the extra £300m cash injection announced last month.

The British Medical Association said it was futile to assume waiting lists could be reduced "when NHS trusts have already been squeezed dry and most of them will enter the next financial year in debt". But Mr Dobson countered that three NHS regions had no patients waiting more than 18 months - Northern and Yorkshire, Trent and South and West - and that they had received the same funds as the rest.

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Son tells of premonition that his parents were doomed

The families of the six British victims of the Luxor massacre struggled to come to terms with their grief yesterday, while hundreds of tourists cut short their holidays to fly home to safety. *Clare Garner reports.*

An elderly British couple killed in the Luxor massacre were urged by their son not to go to Egypt, it emerged yesterday. Paul Wigham told how he had had a "sixth sense" that his parents should not take the trip down the Nile, but that they had not heeded his warnings. Egypt was a country they had always wanted to visit.

"I felt it was too risky after the turmoil," explained Mr Wigham. "I spoke to them at length but they seemed to treat it as a joke. They seemed to think there was more chance of being knocked over on the road or involved in a plane crash. They said it was just the same thing in Egypt as over here."

George and Ivy Wigham, from Swanley, Kent, had flown to Egypt last Friday. Their two-week tour of the country was a



The Temple of Queen Hatshepsut, the site of the massacre, with a bullet hole visible on an adjacent wall (right)

Photograph: Reuters

way of celebrating Mrs Wigham's completion of seven years of study for an Open University degree.

Paul Wigham, 45, from Colliers Wood, south London, said his parents, Mr Wigham, 69, a production manager and Mrs

Wigham, 71, a secretary, had always dreamt of going down the Nile. "It was quite a romantic idea but we don't know if they managed to do it," he added. Now he is haunted by the image of his parents' final moments. "I just get the same pic-

tures of my mother and my father having to kneel down while someone - machine-gunned them to death," he said.

The other victims were Shaunnah Turner, five, her mother, Karina, 24, and Karina's mother, Joan, from Rip-

ponden, West Yorkshire, and Sylvia Wilder, 26, an air hostess based at Gatwick Airport, who held joint British and Bulgarian nationality.

Travel companies moved swiftly to evacuate surviving Britons. A fleet of aircraft flew to Egypt in the morning to begin an airlift of hundreds of holidaymakers in case of further attacks.

The first batch arrived at Heathrow at 12.30pm. Forty of the 100 British pensioners travelling with Saga Holidays had been staying near the scene of the massacre in the popular Luxor site.

Margaret Gostley, 58, from the Isle of Arran, in Scotland, described the panic as tourists tried to flee the country.

"There was a lot of confusion; we really didn't know what was going on."

"It was really frightening. We packed our bags in less than an hour to get ready to come back to Cairo on time to catch the plane today."

Terry O'Brien, 71, from Limerick, Ireland, said on landing: "It was a very grim atmosphere in Luxor; most people felt very scared and upset."

"It turned from a stunning resort to a battleground and none of us knew what was happening, it was all so confusing. No one would want to stay with such danger hanging over them. 'But I hope it won't put people off going there, because it just wouldn't be fair on the rest of the country.'"

Major travel firms cancel holiday flights

Tour operators gave a mixed response yesterday about how hard the terrorist attack in Luxor, which claimed the lives of 58 foreign visitors, would hit Egypt's tourist trade. Many flights have been cancelled over the next few days, but the impact in the long term is less clear.

British travel companies are offering clients due to travel to Egypt refunds or alternative holidays and several countries are considering whether to warn tourists against travelling there.

Egypt has become an increasingly popular holiday destination among Britons, with 350,000 travelling there last year. Until now, this year's tourist numbers had been buoyant, reaching 3.5 million - up from 3.2 million in 1996. However, three major British tour operators who arrange trips for a large share of these tourists have cancelled all holiday flights to the country over the next three days.

If the tourist figures dip in the longer term, the loss of revenue will be sorely felt. Egypt's tourist industry has an annual turnover of more than £2bn, and up to 10 million people - almost one in six Egyptians - depend on foreign visitors for their livelihood.

Thomas Cook Holidays, Britain's largest tour operator, said it did not anticipate a huge decline in tourist inter-

est in Egypt. Only two of its 140 clients currently in Egypt have decided to come home and only 50 of its 300 holidaymakers due to travel there before the end of the year have decided to cancel or transfer to another destination following Monday's tragedy.

The company is accepting cancellations and transfers without charge for all departures to Egypt until the end of the year. Its next scheduled departure for the country, a Nile Discovery tour leaving on Saturday, is going ahead for those who still wish to go, although the itinerary is being adapted to comply with Foreign Office advice to tourists to avoid the Luxor area.

Britain and the United States have issued emergency advice urging visitors to avoid areas along the Nile in upper Egypt, and Japan has followed suit.

An employee at the Shin Nihon Travel Company, a Japanese company which arranged tours to Egypt for approximately 3,000 tourists last year, said many clients had called in since the attack to cancel trips.

France's National Travel Agents' Union (SNAV) said in a statement that it recommended that members suspend sales of tours to Egypt "until further notice", and delay or shift to another holiday destination packages already sold. — *Clare Garner*

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The young who sing and dance as they murder in the name of Islam

Hosni Mubarak, Egypt's President, yesterday blamed his interior minister for the pitiful lack of security at the site of Monday's massacre of 58 foreign tourists. He claimed the killers were neither Islamic nor Egyptian. But Gema's Islamiyah (Islamic Group), which claimed responsibility, is part of a home-grown rebellion that may have splintered into more ferocious elements.

If the Egyptians want to understand the nature of Monday's slaughter in the Valley of the Queens at Luxor, they could do no better than listen to Rosemarie Dousse, the Swiss woman who lay wounded beneath the bodies of her countrymen as the six killers searched for more tourists to murder. They were very young, she said. And at one point they started dancing and singing. Never before in any attack - against foreigners or Egyptians - have the rebels behaved like this. Never have they been particularly young.

"They made us get down on our knees," Ms Dousse said. "And then they started shooting. A man who was very heavy fell on me and the lady behind me also covered me. They shot me in the arm and leg, and then they started again shooting those who were still alive in the head."

Ms Dousse, with incredible presence of mind, smeared the blood of her dead friends over her face and hands so that she should also appear dead. Then the gunmen came back to look for more wounded to kill, some of them with knives. Yet never have Egypt's "Islamic" rebels so methodically forced their victims to kneel, Algerian-style, before shooting or stabbing them to death.

President Mubarak's reaction when he reached Luxor yesterday was anger but - in one respect - wide of the mark. The

killers, he said, were "murderers and criminals who do not belong to Islam or any other religion... or to the country".

As for Mr Mubarak, they are Egyptians. And despite the fury of Luxor traders - depending for their livelihood on tourism - who spat on the corpses of the killers when Egyptian troops brought them down from the hills, the six men who destroyed much of Egypt's tourist industry in 45 minutes came from the poverty-belt of the Arab world's largest country.

With equal predictability, Mr Mubarak fired his interior minister. "The area is full of tourists and you tell me police are two kilometres away. This is a joke of a strategy." And here the Egyptian president was right. Having so often announced the end of "terrorism", Hassan Ali, the interior minister, appears to have believed his own boast and failed to ensure that security was maintained. Had he not, after all, broken many of the "Gema'a Islamiyah's"

the rebels, the minister watched the "Gema'a" fragment. New village "emirs" took over cells of ever-younger unemployed men, many of them in their middle teens. And from the villages came word that these new recruits regarded their imprisoned elders as traitors. They had been taught that they were fighting for God - not for God with conditions attached.

So it is not surprising that Ms Dousse noticed the youth of the murderers at Luxor. And their strange behaviour. A sense of betrayal can breed fearful deeds - as the Algerians know to their cost - and the cold-blooded "executions" may well have been the result. And since some of the most ghastly of Algeria's killers are believed to be on drugs during their orgies of blood, so Egypt's new "Gema'a" teenagers may be encouraged to forget their inhibitions. Heroin and hashish are perennial problems among Egypt's poor.

Yesterday morning, a statement from the "Gema'a" was faxed to Reuters news agency in Cairo, apparently without the usual Koranic inscription at the top, claiming that the Luxor gunmen had been trying to kidnap the tourists in exchange for Omar Abdel Rahman, jailed in the United States for bombing conspiracy.

The police, it said, killed the tourists when they confronted the gunmen. It was a lie. But it was a statement which surely came from the hand of an angry and perhaps younger man than usual. Poverty in upper Egypt exists in conclave with the growing suspicion that government ministers involved in corruption. After President Mubarak's rebuke, Mr Ali's ruthless successor, Habib Ibrahim el-Adli, will now send his men in again to make thousands more arrests. And the torture rooms will be open for business already on the third floor of police headquarters in Lazouhly street.

The repression might even prove to be the fire that resolidifies the "Gema'a" again in hatred at the government - which just might be the cruel reasoning behind Monday's atrocity.

BY ROBERT FISK

cells? Were not hundreds of its members in the massive Tora prison complex? Had not scores confessed and been strung up for their crimes - admittedly after electric torture at the hands of the police? Indeed they had.

And in September, a series of communiqués came from the dark corridors of the Tora complex, appealing for dialogue with the government. The most prominent Islamist lawyer in Cairo - or at least the most prominent since the death of another lawyer in police custody - insisted that the "Gema'a" wanted negotiations.

It was something Mr Ali had no interest in. Since his personnel had infiltrated

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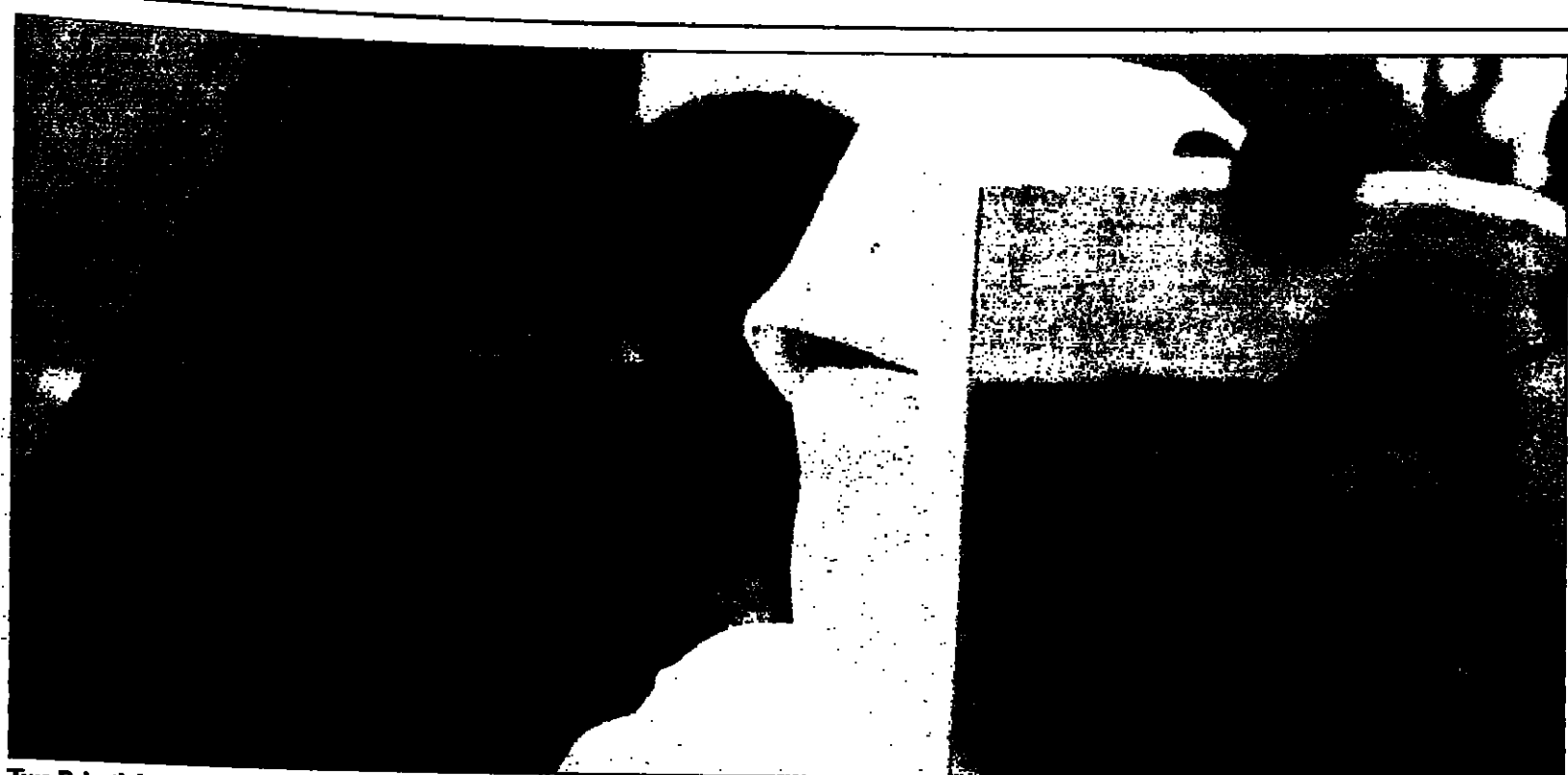
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Two Palestinian women hold a portrait of Itaf Ilian - a female Palestinian prisoner who is on hunger strike in Gaza - during a demonstration by 200 supporters

Amnesty's Algeria report hits at security services

Amnesty International yesterday accused the international community of an "abdication of responsibility" towards the Algerian people.

The report on Algeria describes the civilian population as "caught in a spiral of violence". It notes that massacres have often taken place in close proximity to military barracks and security-forces posts. But, Amnesty notes in its report, "The army and security forces have never intervened to stop the massacres and the murderers were, in each case, allowed to leave undisturbed".

At the very least, Amnesty argues, "Algerian authorities are responsible and should account for the consistent failure to provide protection for the civilian population." In addition, Amnesty talks of the "growing concern" that units of the army or security forces may have been responsible for some of the massacres.

In response to reports by Robert Fisk in the *Independent* (based partly on the testimony of former Algerian policemen, speaking out for the first time), the Algerian

ambassador to London wrote this month to complain of "limited sources of information" and insufficient "corroborating evidence" for the first-hand accounts.

Amnesty argues, however, that the Algerian government has repeatedly failed to respond to charges. "Amnesty regrets that its requests for talks with the Algerian government, as well as its substantive communications, have remained without response and that no measures have been taken to address its concerns."

Amnesty concludes its report by noting that the international community has "shunned its responsibilities in the face of a tragedy which takes place *in camera*". The UN Human Rights Commission has "carefully avoided addressing the issues of the human rights situation in Algeria".

The European Union and parliament have, despite vague declarations condemning violence, "failed to recognise any state responsibility concerning the human rights violations".

— Steve Crowshaw

Britain warns of Saddam's timebomb

Britain warned yesterday that Iraq could make a small number of chemical and biological arms 'in a matter of months' if UN inspectors were removed. As diplomatic efforts to solve the crisis escalate, Mary Dejevsky finds there is still concern in London and Washington that Baghdad should not be let off the hook.

Britain yesterday took the unusual step of releasing an intelligence assessment prepared for the Government on the threat from Iraq's programmes to build weapons of mass destruction. It said Iraq could build missiles capable of hitting Israel and Saudi Arabia "with little risk of detection" as long as it retained the key components, and warned of the risks of allowing the United Nations Special Commission inspectors to be withdrawn.

"If Unscm were to be removed or prevented from operating for a sustained period, Iraq could produce within a matter of months a small number of chemical or biological weapons, including missiles warheads," the assessment said. "Provided it still has key components - and that is unclear - Iraq could within a few months build, with little risk of detection, missiles capable of hitting Israel and key targets in Saudi Arabia." The assessment added that any Iraqi attempts to produce crude air-delivered nuclear devices or chemical agents on a large scale would almost certainly be detected.

The information came as it was announced that foreign ministers from the five permanent members of the UN Security Council would meet in Geneva today or tomorrow to discuss a possible diplomatic so-

lution to the dispute with Iraq. The news of a possible peace plan came out of Moscow, where the Iraqi deputy prime minister, Tariq Aziz, had held a surprise meeting with the Russian foreign minister, Yevgeny Primakov.

The Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein told Russian President Boris Yeltsin in a letter that he wants a "balanced political solution" to the crisis with the United Nations to help lift UN sanctions, Mr Aziz said.

Mr Primakov, a veteran of Gulf politics and the Soviet Union's special envoy to the region before and during the 1991 Gulf War, had been encouraged by Britain, France and by the United States to try his hand at a settlement.

This was not how things were presented by the Americans. Embarrassed by reports that Washington was open to improving the terms of Iraq's "oil-for-food" arrangement - under which Iraq may sell \$2bn worth of oil every six months to buy food and medicine for its population - US officials stressed that compromising with Iraq was out of the question and that the use of force remained an option.

Reinforcing the tough public line it has pursued since the start, the Pentagon announced that it was dispatching more aircraft - B52 and F117 Stealth bombers - to join the 200 or so planes already in the region.

The most likely form of deal appeared to include an increase in the amount of oil Iraq is permitted to sell, more clearly defined conditions for ending sanctions, the return of UN inspection teams to Iraq and an expansion of Unscm, the UN commission overseeing the weapons inspections.

The difficulty for Britain and America is that this amounts to a climbdown from their original hardline position and would give Iraq much of what it wanted when it first moved against American weapons inspectors last month.

Libya in the dock as Berlin disco bombing case opens

Libya's days as a terrorist superpower are being revisited in a Berlin court. Eleven years ago three people died, including two US soldiers, and 200 were injured by a bomb attack on West Berlin's La Belle discotheque, a haunt for servicemen.

Ten days later President Ronald Reagan ordered reprisals on Tripoli and Benghazi. One of the US bombs fell on Muammar Gaddafi's tent, killing his adopted daughter; dozens of others died. The trial to determine who was behind the Belle bombing opened yesterday and adjourned; prosecutors said they hope it will be concluded in this millennium.

In the dock are three former employees of the Libyan embassy in East Berlin and their two alleged German accessories. One defendant is also a witness: Musbah Abulghasem

Eter, described as head of the Libyan secret service in the embassy, is said to have made a confession and is expected to testify against his alleged accomplices. Ali Chanaa, a German citizen of Lebanese origin, and Yassir Ciraidi, a Palestinian, are accused of organising the attack. Two German sisters, Andrea Hännstter, and Mr Chanaa's ex-wife, Verena, are accused of planting the bomb.

Much evidence has been culled from files of the Stasi, the former East German secret service, which knew such an attack was being planned. US spies operating in Berlin also knew and even leaned on the East German authorities to forestall it. The suspicion is that one of the three male defendants was a double agent also working for the Americans.

— Inne Karaci, Bonn

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Serb lover 'used sex' to control RAF man

The trial of an RAF officer accused of murdering his wife was told yesterday that he neglected military duties in Bosnia for his beautiful Serbian interpreter. Kim Sengupta reports on claims of how operations were run on her 'whim'.

The Serbian interpreter with a UN military observers unit in Bosnia "used sex to manipulate people", and Sqn Ldr Nicholas Tucker became her "lapdog", a court was told yesterday.

Li Timothy Stear, of the Royal Marines, who served with Sqn Ldr Tucker in former Yugoslavia, told the jury that military operations were sometimes decided "on the whim" of Dijana Dudukovic. The 44-year-old officer would go shopping with her in Zagreb while he should have been on patrol.

Sqn Ldr Tucker, of Honington, Suffolk, is accused of murdering his wife Carol, 52, in a staged car accident after be-

coming "infatuated" with Ms Dudukovic, 21. He denies the charge.

Li Stear told Norwich Crown Court that while in Bosnia Sqn Ldr Tucker was, in his view, "inefficient, unprofessional and idle". He said: "It appeared to me he was running around after her, fetching and carrying beer and food for parties, in effect being her lapdog. She manipulated him, and treated him quite badly."

David Cox, QC, for the defence, suggested to Li Stear that Ms Dudukovic "was a good-looking woman and attractive to men. Nobody could have had any illusions about her settling down to a cosy long-term relationship". Li Stear responded: "What I was aware of, was that it passed to whoever was in charge."

Li Stear worked with Sqn Ldr Tucker at Sector North in Krajna after serving in Bihać. The lieutenant told the court that by his actions Sqn Ldr Tucker was "letting the side down". He told the court that while Bihać was in the centre of fierce fighting life was com-

paratively much easier in Sector North and Sqn Ldr Tucker "appeared to be enjoying himself". He said: "He was unaware of an incident when the RAF officer had been hijacked by masked men in balacavas." Li Stear also said that a former operations officer at Krajna from the Norwegian Army also felt that Sqn Ldr Tucker's actions were unprofessional.

Asked to comment on an official report by UN headquarters staff that Sqn Ldr Tucker's conduct had been "excellent", Lieutenant Stear said in the reports "everyone was excellent". Yesterday morning the judge and jury went to the scene where Sqn Ldr Tucker crashed his car at river Lark in Suffolk.

While there Sqn Ldr Tucker, standing in an area of long grass next to Lackford Bridge, straddling the narrow stretch of water, cried and wiped his eyes. He had claimed following the crash in July 1995 that the family's car had swerved into the water when his wife had suddenly gripped the steering wheel in order to avoid a herd of deer. The case continues.



Up for grabs: Sergeant Geoff Bishop with some of the thousands of stolen items recovered in the Kent, Sussex, Surrey, West Mercia and Metropolitan police areas. Property can be reclaimed when it is put on view at Epsom Racecourse, Surrey, from Friday to Sunday. Photograph: Andrew Burman

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Irvine defiant over legal aid shake-up

The Government yesterday indicated its determination to press ahead with radical plans to reduce the legal aid bill despite widespread hostility from lawyers and consumer groups.

The Lord Chancellor Lord Irvine and his junior minister Geoff Hoon are said to be "firm and resolute" on the plans which could cut £300m off the £1.5bn cost of legal aid.

They believe much of the opposition to the proposals, which will phase in the conditional no win, no fee system for most civil damages claims next April, comes from solicitors who are "addicted to subsidy" in the form of legal aid whether they win or lose cases. In a Commons debate on Friday Mr Hoon will signal little compromise on the sweeping reforms put forward by Lord Irvine last month.

A senior source in the Lord Chancellor's Department said they would be commissioning management consultants to show how law firms can deal with the commercial risks of litigation. They hope to publish its findings early next year when a consultation document is issued.

on the wider legal aid plans.

The source said the message from ministers is that these "fairly radical" plans are "going to happen... Otherwise there will be an assumption that things will not really change".

The toughness of yesterday's comments show the frustration of ministers that the perceived benefits of their plans have been ignored. Removing legal aid from most civil damages actions could free money for more deserving cases, such as tenant claims against landlords, and give more not less access to the poor, they claim.

They insist that solicitors should be prepared to bear the risk of bringing cases - and funding the upfront costs involved - in the same way as other businesses. "Lawyers seem to want a situation where everybody bears the risk apart from themselves," said the source.

The Law Society said yesterday it was concerned the Government wanted to go ahead with its "ill-considered and ill-thought proposals".

— Michael Streeter, Legal Affairs Correspondent

Business park could create 15,000 jobs in Ulster

Plans for a £100m investment in Northern Ireland with the potential to create up to 15,000 jobs were unveiled. The largest single jobs boost in the history of the province, if successful, could slash unemployment by nearly 25 per cent.

The Welsh-based investment company TBI, which bought Belfast International Airport for £100m 15 months ago, proposes developing 190 acres of surplus airport land into a massive mixed-business development. The company proposes building the UK's first "call-centre park" of 450,000 square feet, offices, aircraft-maintenance hangars, freight, cargo and warehousing, business units and a non-food factory outlet village. Emphasising the potential for call centres, TBI said that in the US more than 40 per cent of all phone calls made were into and out through a call centre - in the UK it was only 4 per cent.

Vatican urged to open files

Leading British Jews have appealed to the Vatican to open its wartime files on the Nazis' relations with the Catholic Church. As efforts continue to trace the assets of Holocaust victims, Eldred Tabachnik, president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, said: "So long as the archives remain closed, people's understanding of those relationships will be based upon rumour and speculation. It would be a matter of lasting regret if the Vatican were unable to assure the world as to the truth of its relationships during the Nazi era."

Policeman jailed for assault

A policeman was jailed for six months at the Old Bailey after being convicted of kicking a student 20 times on the eve of a festival for the homeless.

Paul Evans, 32, from Stoke Newington police station, north London, brought disgrace on himself and shame on his profession, said Judge Graham Boal. The jury was told he assaulted Ben Swarbrick; he was also found guilty of affray, but cleared of other charges of assault, false imprisonment and conspiring to pervert the course of justice. Evans will be sacked from the police and lose his pension.

— Jason Bennett, Crime Correspondent

Benny violin nets £49,900

Jack Benny's violin, an essential part of the comedian's act in films, television and variety for more than 40 years, was sold for £49,900 at Sotheby's in London.

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Hospital failed

11/POLITICS

Major boosts Malone's circus act

Gerry Malone's circus came to Winchester in a big way yesterday with John Major giving his support. Onlookers might have imagined the former health minister had tomorrow's by-election in the bag. But the picture is not quite so clear, says Fran Abrams.

11.15am and the chocolate brownies are circulating as neatly coiffured ladies smooth their already flawless attire. In their midst stands Gerry Malone, a former Tory health minister, dressed in corduroys, a blue sweater and a pair of green wellies. This is life on "the knocker" Hampshire-style.

Mr Malone - declared loser by two votes on 1 May only to overturn the verdict in court - has turned down a biscuit, as he is on a diet. So far there has been little sign of sceptical questioning or hard-edged debate despite an earlier "hit" on a mobile home park populated by elderly voters of a mainly blue-rinse hue.

Barry Nicholson, the Swanmore branch treasurer in whose house the biscuits are being served, believes Mr Malone can win. But he admits the campaign has been hit by claims, in his view unjustified, that the Liberal Democrat candidate, Mark Oaten, will be more visible locally.

Mr Malone agrees the issue is a major one. "You can go off and be a dustman for a day, but you don't have to be an MP to do it," he says, referring to a recent publicity stunt by his rival.

Back out into the rain, and some real canvassing seems to be on the menu. But the first stop is at the home of some Tory

supporters who listen intently while their candidate explains that the electorate has now flaked their desire to give the Tories a kicking.

Off down the road again, the rest of the party is forced to break into an intermittent trot. "Come on! crack on!" Mr Malone cries, and crack on he does. A couple of handshakes with shopkeepers then off into a private housing estate at a gallop.

Finally, a challenge: How will Gerry vote on the age of homosexual consent? An easy one, this - around here there are not too many gay rights campaigners - and he fields it easily to receive the promise of a vote. Within minutes, he is disappearing down the road in his battle-bus for his meeting with Mr Major.

The former Prime Minister, hot foot from the Beckenham by-election, also tomorrow, lunches with the candidate before a walk-about in the city centre. Here, the party's youth are waiting in sweatshirts which say: "Winchester needs Gerry back." Given Mr Malone's statement in this week's *Hampshire Chronicle* that he "did not need to surround myself with mincers and spin doctors" their presence is all more remarkable.

Half way up the high street stand a man and a woman plastered in Liberal Democrat stickers, bearing a poster which reads: "Tory betrayal of Lloyd's names". Tony Hockley, Mr Malone's press officer, throws himself in front of them along with a board of sweatshirts, screaming: "Gerry back! Gerry back! No more silent Liberals."

Mr Malone and Mr Major pass by on the other side of the road. For a man with a reputation as a political bruiser, the candidate has done a sterling job of avoiding his detractors.



Hair-raising event: John Major talking to customers at a salon in Beckenham, south-east London, during a by-election campaign visit yesterday

Mileage penalty for company cars

The Chancellor is to target company cars as part of a package of "green" taxes in a pre-Budget statement next Tuesday.

As part of the Government's attempts to dissuade people from using polluting vehicles, Gordon Brown will be changing the tax system to make the tax on company cars more geared to the miles business users travel. At present some of the 1.6 million business car users get a tax discount if they have a high business mileage. That system is to end, and business users in future will pay more for higher mileage, while those with low mileage will pay less tax.

The pre-Budget statement will be the first time that a Chancellor has opened his Budget box for consultation before producing firm proposals. Mr Brown will return in the spring with firm proposals in the Budget, and next week's package will be seen as an attempt to soften up public opinion for some potentially unpopular tax increases on motorists.

— Colin Brown



**reception's terrible,
have another look
for my tape**

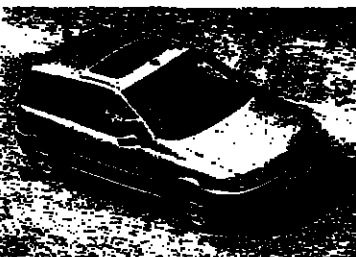


don't be ridiculous

**like I said,
it's not in here**



I'm not joking



like I need reminding



pity.

**you know it never
leaves the car**

**tapes don't just
vanish into thin air**

Appeal row rocks 'sleaze' body

Parliament's official sleaze investigator was yesterday accused of exerting improper influence to block an appeal for Neil Hamilton.

Anthony Bevins, Political Editor, reports on the Westminster row.

Ann Widdecombe yesterday resigned from the Commons Standards and Privileges Committee after denouncing its investigation into the cash-for-question affair as a "shambles", and claiming a breakdown of trust within the committee.

But her protest resignation was later capped by a sensational charge made by Quentin Davies, another Conservative member of the committee. Disclosing the committee's private deliberations, he alleged that Sir Gordon Downey, the independent Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, had intervened to block any appeal for Mr Hamilton, the former Tory MP accused of accepting cash from Mohamed Al Fayed, the owner of Harrods.

The lack of appeal for Mr Hamilton was widely denounced as a denial of his fundamental rights of natural

justice in a Commons debate on Monday. Mr Davies told BBC radio's *World at One* yesterday: "The Commissioner played an unfortunate role in this, because, though I think it was a very good report, he then got very upset when it looked as though there was a possibility of appeal, and his verdict might be opened up again."

"When it came to the crunch, he tried to use his influence to stop that happening. That was quite wrong."

Miss Widdecombe told *The Independent* she would not criticise a public official, but she was scathing in her condemnation of Robert Sheldon, Labour chairman of the Standards and Privileges Committee, who said after it issued its report on 6 November that the committee had voted nine-nil and that there was compelling evidence that Mr Hamilton had taken Mr Fayed's money. She said in her resignation letter that that was "a gross misrepresentation" of her view - that the case against Mr Hamilton was not proven.

She told Mr Sheldon: "What is at issue is that this experience means that in future I would be most unwilling to work towards compromise or unanimity, were I to entertain doubts or reservations about any matter, because I could never be sure of the formal construction which would later be put on my position..."

Hospital failed bereaved

A London teaching hospital's failure to deal with complaints from bereaved relatives was so "grotesque" that it defied any sense of compassion, MPs said yesterday. The University College London Hospitals NHS Trust received six complaints within two years but failed to send proper replies, the Commons committee on the Ombudsman was told.

In one case, in 1994, a woman complained after she was not immediately told of her father's deteriorating health and subsequent death and that she had to wait several hours before she was allowed to see his body. She wrote to the hospital the same day and received a letter of acknowledgement addressed incorrectly three days later, but she was never sent a reply to her complaint.

Challenged by MPs, Sir Ronald Mason, chairman of the trust, said there had been "a tragic lack of communication" but promised the likelihood of it happening again was negligible.

Jeremy Laurence

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Spirito di Punto

Master tactician's blunder thwarts Russian progress

The champion of Russia's reforms, Anatoly Chubais, is caught in a corruption scandal. Unlike most Kremlin intrigues, this one threatens to derail the country from its path to change. Phil Reeves reports from Moscow.

Whatever the outcome of Russia's latest *scandale du jour*, one fact is clear: the country's transition towards a Western-style economy will now be even slower and more tortured. All this, thanks to an astonishing blunder by a man who was meant to be a master tactician: Anatoly Chubais.

A week ago Mr Chubais was in an enviable position in the Kremlin. Working with another young reformer, Boris Nemtsov, he was the strongest of the fractious forces behind Boris Yeltsin. Few outside the country cared that he is detested by most Russians, who see him as a gingery Rasputin who gave away the nation's riches. To Western eyes, he was a hard-headed whiz-kid who could save the Russian economy by forcing the old guard to accept a realistic budget and tax reforms. Time and again, international investors and diplomats cited his presence as a reason for optimism. Now the balloon has burst.

Even if he retains his job as First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Mr Chubais's position has been drastically weakened. Anxious not to dent international confidence, Boris Yeltsin refused his offer to resign last weekend, but many on-lookers believe that he cannot stay on for long. Parliament's dominant Communists are threatening to refuse to pass the crucial 1998 budget unless they receive his scalp. True, Mr Yeltsin reacts badly to ultimatums, yet his minister's long term future looks grim.

"Before Chubais had a reliable team and the full support of the president. He now lacks both," said Alexander Bezz, head of the Civil Society Foundation in Moscow. "I think he will be made a scapegoat, and

that he has three months at most." The cause of his demise is surprisingly paltry, given the vast sums of money which routinely cross his desk. He received \$90,000 as an alleged advance for an unpublished economics book from a company controlled by one of the main beneficiaries of several big state sell-offs. Four co-authors, all once in government, also received similarly suspicious payments. Three were fired last week; one had already been sacked over an earlier scandal. Their departure has blown a big hole in Mr Chubais's team, and an equally large hole in his credibility.

Mr Chubais, 42, was never a white-hot hero. Rumours have long circulated about his finances. His credentials as a democrat or a liberal are scanty - as he proved by masterminding Boris Yeltsin's unprincipled election campaign last year. But the latest revelations supply the first really damaging evidence against him. Corruption is one of the biggest blights of the Russian economy; combating it is supposed to be central to his brief.

In many ways, Mr Chubais's mistake was not so much greed or stupidity as underestimating his enemies. He gunned for his rival Boris Berezovsky, a billionaire tycoon sacked from Russia's Security Council last month. Unlike most of Mr Chubais's enemies, the businessman was well equipped to reply in kind; he owns newspapers and a television station. Armed with some "kompromat" (compromising material) revenge was easy.

For Russia, the Chubais affair is untimely. There have been signs that Russia could soon register its first annual growth since Soviet times. Foreign investment was picking up; even the gloomier tea-leaf gazers were beginning to concede that Russia's fortunes may at last be turning. "This has undermined all hope for economic growth next year," said Alexander Piontkovsky, head of a Moscow think-tank, the Centre for Strategic Studies. He believes that the flight of foreign investors from the Russian market is now inevitable. For now, the mood is once again bleak and wintry.



A police diver carrying a victim out of the Yamuna river in New Delhi yesterday after a school bus crashed killing 27 children. Sixty were also injured when the bus with up to 110 children on board skidded and plunged 30ft into the water. Photograph: AP

Kohl's Christian Democrats catch up on pink politics

The German Christian Democrats, self-declared champions of the family, are about to embark on the path trodden by their opponents. Every party but Helmut Kohl's own has a homosexual section. Now, a group of gay CDU activists are also planning to come out.

"There are many examples of gays losing their party mandates when they are discovered to be homosexual," said Lars Lüttich, one of the organisers of Gay Christian Democrats.

Representatives of five of Germany's 16 *Länder* held their in-

augural meeting at the weekend. A national congress, involving gay Christian Democrats from every region, is planned for next March. Most of the group, like Mr Lüttich, have held high-ranking posts in the CDU's youth wing, and saw their careers broken because of their sexuality. They are united by the goal of raising the profile of gays in the party by campaigning for greater tolerance.

"It must be possible for someone to say 'I am homosexual' without the danger of suffering discrimination," Mr Lüttich said.

There are, he adds, many prominent gays in the top echelons of the party who do not dare to come out because of the fear of repercussions. Several of them work in the Chancellor's inner circle. Mr Kohl professes not to care, so long as his colleagues are loyal and do their jobs properly. The rest of the party is not so tolerant, however. The grass roots are vehemently opposed to gay liberation, and have scuppered all attempts to allow homosexuals to adopt children.

The party is also burdened by a history of persecution, which

gay activists say stems directly from Nazi practices. Next February, Mr Lüttich and his friends plan to hold a seminar about the "gay Holocaust". In order to draw attention to parallels between the treatment of Jews and homosexuals, this meeting will be held at the villa in Wannsee where the plan for the Final Solution was hatched.

Christian Democrat-led governments kept the notorious Nazi law in force until the Seventies, resulting in 100,000 prosecutions and 50,000 convictions. — Imre Karacs, Bonn

Murder hunt suspect seizes envoy's family

A murder suspect sought in a six-month manhunt took a South African embassy official and his family hostage in a suburban Taipei house last night.

Police had surrounded Chen Chin-hsing, in the house in a mountainous area of the Taiwanese capital. Chen was wanted in connection with the kidnap and murder of a teenage girl and the murder of a plastic surgeon and two nurses.

Colonel EGM Alexander, the military attaché at the South African High Commission, was brought out of the house, apparently wounded in the shoulder. "Just get my wife and family out of there," he shouted.

His oldest daughter, Melanie, 22, was brought out on a stretcher with what appeared to be a gunshot wound, but another daughter, his wife and an unidentified infant were still inside, police said, as the standoff continued into the early morning hours.

Doctors at Yang Ming General Hospital in Taipei said Col Alexander and his oldest daughter were in stable condition.

A man claiming to be Chen spoke to Taiwan Television by telephone, saying he was "forced" into taking the hostages to fight for the innocence of his friends and relatives now being held by police in connection with the earlier kidnap and murder.

Chen is the last survivor among three men suspected of kidnapping and murdering Pai Hsiao-yen, the 17-year-old daughter of one of Taiwan's most popular entertainers, in April.

Chen is also suspected of breaking into homes around Taipei and raping several women.

— AP Taipei



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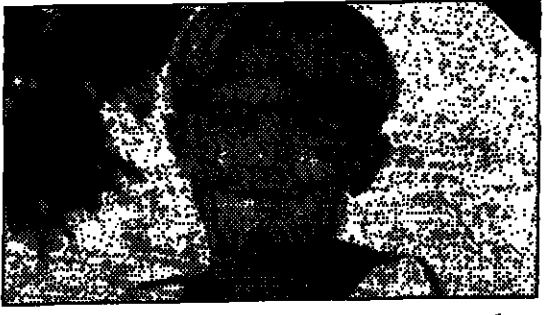
And what you shoot, will dictate which of the Vectis 40's three photo formats you choose: 'H' format for big pictures, 'P' format or 'Panoramic', for a wide one (the sort that proves you've been to the Sahara and not Morecambe Bay) or 'C' format for portraits or more general pictures.



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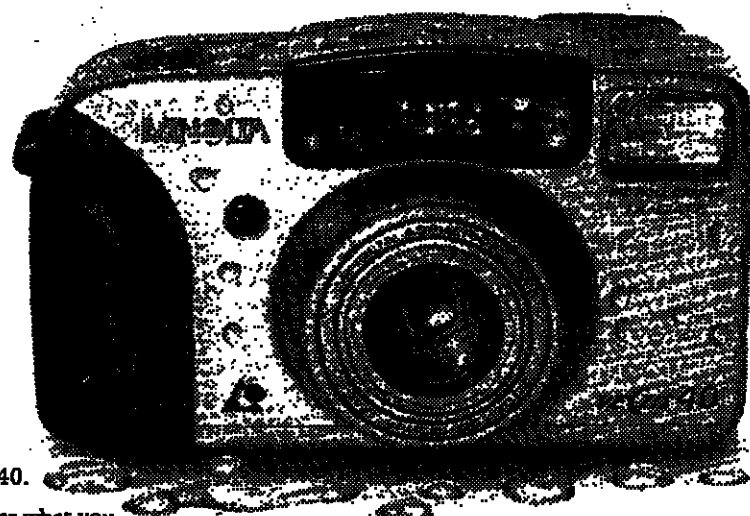
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13/EUROPEAN NEWS

THE INDEPENDENT
WEDNESDAY
19 NOVEMBER 1997
13

Bargains galore as new era dawns for Paris's finest hotel

The entire contents of one of the world's most celebrated hotels, the George V in Paris, go up for auction this week and next. The 10,000 lots range from a bed used by the Rolling Stones to Marlene Dietrich's dressing-table. John Lichfield joined the throng bidding for a scrap of modern Parisian history.

Everything must go, down to the last commissionaire's peaked cap; down to the last crested champagne bucket.

If you want a hotel mini-bar with the George V insignia, there is still time: there are 200 of them on offer for about £70 each. "They still work," an auctioneer's assistant whispered to one potential buyer, "but they are *excessivement démodé* (hopelessly out-of-date)."

That was the problem with the George V. Only 72 years old, and an art nouveau temple for the fashionable and famous in its day, it had become *excessivement démodé*. Its new owner, Alwaleed Bin Talal Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, nephew of King Fahd, decided last month to rip everything out and start again. He paid £90m for the hotel, just off the Champs Elysées, and plans to spend £30m on its restoration.

The entire contents of the old George V, except for a few celebrated tapestries, are on sale to the highest bidder. There are 10,000 lots and 25,000 individ-

ual items, scores of them associated with names who stayed at the hotel. There was a 300m queue over the weekend to view the most prestigious objects, and hundreds of people packed into the first evening of the sale on Monday night.

Anything with the George V crest, or a connection with a celebrity, however tenuous, was knocked down for an inflated price. A pair of snot-coloured Staffordshire porcelain dogs, which once stood in Greta Garbo's room? £4,500. A pair of boring watercolours which had been on the wall of the suite where Jimmy Carter stayed? £450. The dressing-table from the room Marlene Dietrich used to block-book for years at a time? £1,200.

The double bed in which the Rolling Stones slept (all of them?) went for £4,300, with the rest of the furniture of suite 315 thrown in. The small table on which (allegedly) "Paul Getty signed his cheques" fetched £500. There was much excitement about a marble post-box which stood in the lobby and which, according to Jacques Tajan, the auctioneer, "was only ever used for love-letters". It went for £1,200. A mobile cheese-table, capable of "warming the cheeses - a great curiosity", fetched £1,600.

The only item which did not sell was a walk-in safe, installed in 1930. It would cost £10,000 to remove from the hotel, Mr Tajan said. It failed to reach its guide price of £2,000. Perhaps the saddest lot of all was the first item in the sale, the blue-and-gold flag which flew atop the George V for 70 years. It went to a French dealer for

£450. A new George V will open next autumn, with a gym, swimming-pool and bigger rooms, each equipped with a fax machine, personal computer and an Internet connection. The rooms will, doubtless, have mini-bars which are not *excessivement démodé*.

The George V will take its place again in the front rank of Parisian hotels, able to charge £300 a night for the cheapest rooms (instead of £200 or less). But what price character? Watching the first night of the auction, it felt as if the Hôtel George V was selling off its soul.



Blockbuster: Auctioneer Jacques Tajan with some of the furniture that was offered for sale by the George V before the celebrated Paris hotel closed for a £30m renovation after its purchase by a member of the Saudi Arabian royal family. It will reopen for business next autumn. Photograph: AFP

An Intel Pentium II processor without Gateway?

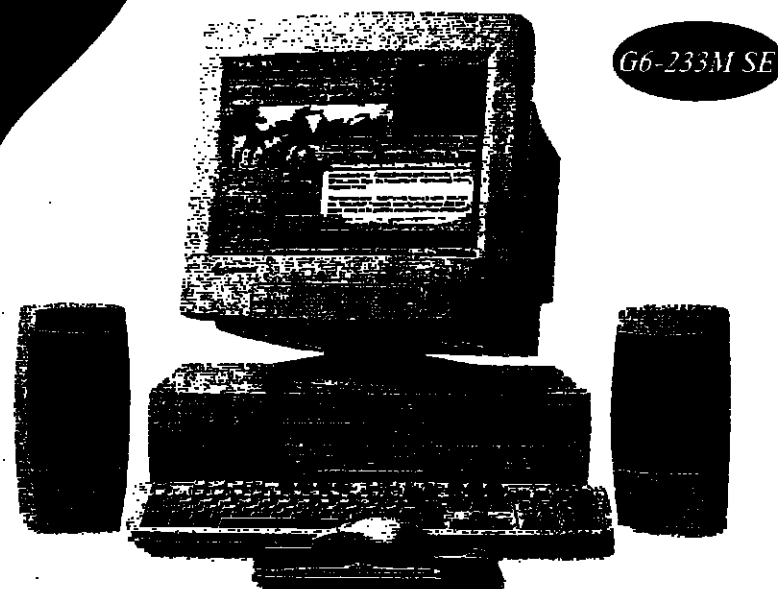
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Detail from Antoine Coypel's *Susanna accused of adultery*
Photograph: Bridgeman Art Library

Prado parades hidden treasures

Madrid's Prado Museum has cleared out its attic to make 10 new rooms devoted to works rarely or never exhibited before. The loft extension that opened to the public yesterday contains works by Goya, Tiepolo, Canova and Mengs — and some important British artists — long buried in the vaults of Europe's finest art collection.

The display of 171 paintings, sketches and sculptures marks "the first consistent exhibition of the Prado's collection of 18th-century European art ever mounted", the director, Fernando Checa, said. It includes the museum's most recent acquisition, *The Witches*, by Goya, and his equally arresting *Duchess of Alba with her Chaplain*.

The works are displayed in a specially low-lit circular chamber amid more than 30 Goya sketches that explore the artist's vision of nightmares, witchcraft and ignorance. The sketches, shown for the first time for decades, will be on view for only two months a year because of their fragile state.

The attic rooms, for years used as repair workshops and storage rooms, have had their ceilings lifted by a metre and are lit by filtered natural light, augmented by spots. "But we can turn the spots down when the sun shines," said a spokesman as if in tacit apology for uncharacteristically gloomy skies. Dispersing the gloom.

however, was a joyous collection of court paintings whose luminous intensity is the result of restoration that most of them underwent in preparation for this exhibition. The works, sensuous country scenes by Boucher and Watteau, magnificent court portraits by Mengs and a stunning *Susanna accused of adultery* by Antoine Coypel mark the transition from the Habsburg to the Bourbon dynasties following the War of the Spanish Succession, which ended in 1713.

These rooms are more intimate in scale than the rest of the museum and echo the style of Spanish palaces of the time, with geometric marble tiled floors and eau-de-Nil walls, adorned with objects and furniture.

For the first time, the museum offers explanatory information on the labels identifying each work, "as part of our educational effort directed at the broad range of visitors that the museum attracts," Mr Checa said.

More difficult to understand, given this confident first step towards the millennium, is the authorities' lackadaisical approach to urgently needed expansion. The Culture Minister, Esperanza Aguirre, who last year annulled a massively trumpeted international competition, saying that none of the submissions was suitable, last week announced yet another contest.

— Elizabeth Nash, Madrid

Setting targets for tomorrow's world

A book to be published next week says Britain must cut fossil fuel use by 90 per cent and make huge reductions in its consumption of other natural resources, for the sake of the planet and all its people. **Nicholas Schoon, Environment Correspondent, looks forward to 'Tomorrow's World.'**

If the Earth's entire population midway through the next century were to live as we in Britain do today, humanity would need about seven extra planets. Eight earths could provide our natural resources quickly enough, along with the capacity to assimilate all our wastes and pollution without critical environmental degradation.

So, says the book commissioned by Friends of the Earth UK, we need to make drastic cutbacks by 2050 – to allow others in poorer, developing countries their fair share of planetary resources and to bring already stressed life-support systems back within safety margins.

As well as an 88 per cent cut in the United Kingdom's fossil fuel use, we ought to use 73 per cent less timber, 15 per cent less water, and cut our consumption of aluminium, steel and ce-

ment by more than 70 per cent. We should halve our use of rock, sand and gravel by 2050 and eliminate the chlorine we use, mostly in the chemicals and plastics industry.

"Imagine a city enclosed in an enormous, impenetrable transparent dome," the book says. "It would not be long before the accumulation of wastes and depletion of resources within it made life intolerable, or impossible. The entire planet is within such a 'glass bubble' – there is a growing realisation that increasing population and increasing consumption are pushing at the limits of what Earth can take."

Signs of abuse and stress are already visible around the world as water shortages, loss of soil fertility, dwindling fish stocks and rising temperatures caused by a build-up of greenhouse gases. In the next century, the threats will be much greater.

A quarter century ago, it was thought humanity would soon run out of basic, non-renewable resources like oil and metals due to the rapid growth in population and industrialisation. Now the dangers are seen as overwhelming nature's ability to absorb pollution, and using renewable resources like wood at a rate far beyond what can be sustained.

The authors estimated what the global consumption limits should be for key resources.

Next they allocated Britain a share based purely on the size of its population and not its relative wealth. Then they calculated how much the UK would have to cut its consumption from current levels, and propose how that might be done.

The limits they came up with are mostly extremely rough and ready, because the science and economics of calculating just what punishment the earth can take are in their early infancy. Much depends on what degree of despoliation is regarded as tolerable, and what techniques are used to exploit natural resources.

Water is the only resource they treat as purely national – all the others can and are freely traded around the world. The book proposes a 15 per cent cut in the total quantity the water companies take, easing the strain on rivers and wetlands and giving some safety margin against declines in rainfall caused by man-made climate change.

The book accepts bringing about these changes will mean huge changes in attitudes, business and in government in Britain and internationally. A start must be made now. But, in the real world, it seems most likely that we will carry on with business as usual.

• *Tomorrow's World*, by Duncan McLaren, Simon Bullock and Nurat Yusuf, published by Earthscan, £12.95.

Prescott's global mission

The Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, tomorrow begins his second round the world voyage inside a month, searching for a breakthrough in the deadlocked global warming negotiations.

He will fly to India, Japan, New Zealand and Australia talking to prime ministers, their deputies and environment ministers, before the 10-day climate change summit in Kyoto, Japan, which begins in under a fortnight.

Yesterday, Mr Prescott told journalists that countries were still deeply divided on how far they should cut their rising emissions of the gases which cause climate change, chiefly carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuels. But some issues over which there could be agreement were beginning to emerge.

The European Union was still holding out for all developed countries to commit to cutting their emissions by 15 per cent by 2010, said Mr Prescott, Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions. But the United States wants only to stabilise its climate pollution at the 1990 level by 2010.

The developed, industrialised states are also divided over what the developing nations should commit themselves to. Poor countries, such as India and China, are hostile to demands that they should take action when the rich, Western nations which have produced the great bulk of greenhouse gases to date, seem reluctant to act.

Michael Meacher, environment minister, reiterated Labour's manifesto pledge that Britain would cut its carbon dioxide emissions by 20 per cent by 2010. It would mean "a more discriminatory use of cars", he said.

— **Nicholas Schoon**



In from cold: Francesco Carramaro with two hedgehogs at St Tiggywinkle's animal hospital, Aylesbury. Photograph: Glynn Griffiths

Wildlife becomes casualty of the latest shift in weather patterns

The hottest November day in more than a century was followed yesterday by torrential downpours, prompting flood warnings across the South-west of England. **Louise Jury looks at the impact of the latest blip on the weather front.**

The Environment Agency issued flood alerts on 16 stretches of river in Somerset, Dorset, Devon and Cornwall yesterday as the skies opened. About 60mm of rain fell in the far west of England in 24 hours.

The sudden downpours

came after the Scottish Highlands recorded the hottest temperature anywhere in the British Isles for the second half of November since 1895.

The temperature in Aulbea in the Wester Ross region of the Highlands reached 18.8C (65.8F) on Monday, beating the previous record of 18.7C (65.6F) set in Croydon, south London, earlier the same day.

Eddie Graham, of PA WeatherCentre, said: "This is a pretty impressive record to break." And in those parts of the country unaffected by rain, the strangely mild weather could continue for some days. It has been caused by warm air sweeping across the Atlantic from warmer places like the Azores and Bermuda.

The normal temperature for this time of year ranges from 7C (45F) in Scotland to up to 15C (59F) on the south coast of England. The warm spell is the latest weather novelty in a year which saw an Easter heatwave followed by snow in May and a variable summer.

Hedgehogs are among the wildlife left suffering by the sudden shifts. The Hedgehog Preservation Society has reported hundreds of baby hedgehogs around at the moment because of the knock-on effects of the unusual weather.

Anne Jenkins, a spokeswoman for the preservation society, said there were always some "autumn orphans" – hedgehogs abandoned as their parents hibernated and too

small to survive the winter themselves.

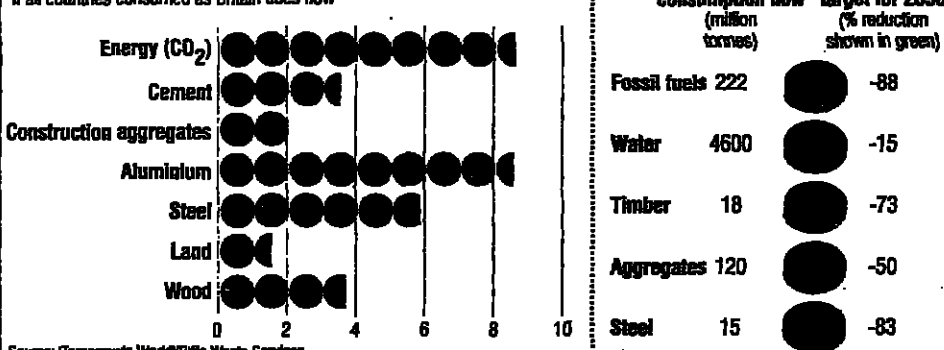
But the strange weather has caused havoc to the breeding patterns. Many of the first litters were killed by the cold spell in May. Hedgehogs went on to breed again, with second litters coming as late as September. The result was many tiny babies now.

"The seasons have really interfered," Mrs Jenkins said. The baby hedgehogs, the size of a grapefruit when half grown, had no chance of putting on enough weight to be able to survive without human help.

However, Mrs Jenkins said if they were given a dry cardboard box home and fed – dog or cat food, crushed digestives or mussels were all ideal – they might live.

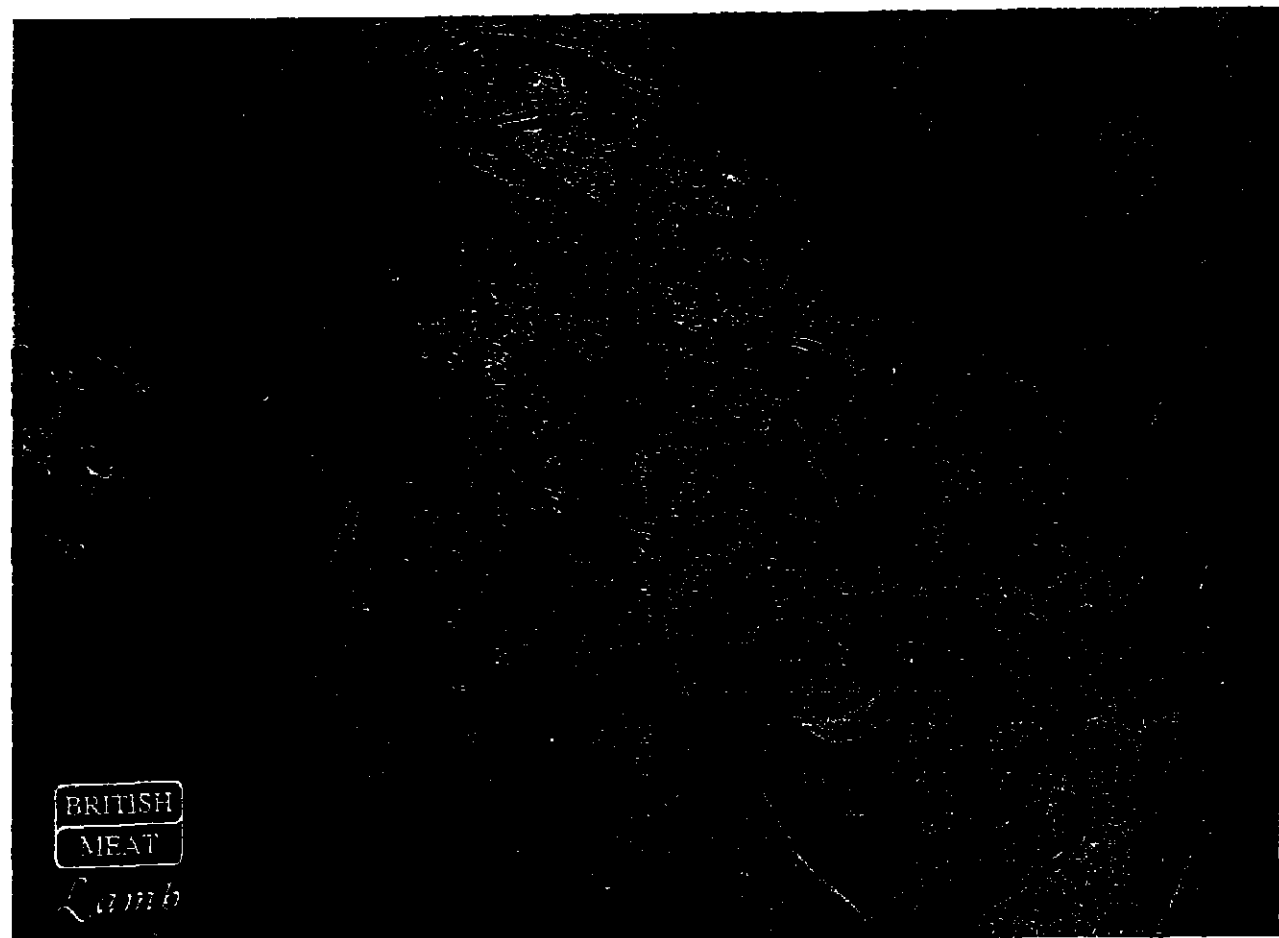
How much do we need for the good life?

Number of planets needed to sustain current global consumption in 2050 if all countries consumed as Britain does now



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Designed by IBM, the site was
conceived using scalable technology
to anticipate massive traffic peaks.

FACT

The cost of processing a traditional
airline ticket is about £5. The cost of
processing an e-ticket is around 62p.



With a projected 175 million people
connected to the Web three years from now,
customers will need travel no further than
across their living room to purchase all kinds
of goods and services. This year, 55 million
potential customers already can.
(Source: IDC/LINK)

FACT

Can you have too many customers?
Actually, yes. If your Web site has
the technology to handle only 4 million
visitors and 8 million turn up, you
can lose a lot of potential customers
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It's happening all around you.

Businesses of all shapes and sizes, of every description, are becoming e-businesses.

Electronic businesses. Using the Internet to find new customers, doing business in new and better ways.

A recent survey indicates that more than 80% of Europe's retail companies are either running e-business projects or plan to do so.

e-business is the future of commerce.

Tens of thousands of businesses, maybe including yours, are adding www addresses to their regular addresses. But what does this change?

It depends. An information-only website, little more than a glorified brochure, is hardly going to set your sales figures on fire. The serious players are already selling stuff over the Internet. Companies love the economics of it, customers love the convenience.

Clearly, e-business is taking off. IBM's role lies in helping businesses do it profitably.

A study by the Meta Group predicts that goods purchased on-line worldwide will grow from £6 billion

for specific customer segments. It can also gather valuable and meaningful information from every order to form the basis of marketing statistics. The sole distributor of Shimano bicycle components in Italy, MIC, uses Net.Commerce to link 4,000 retailers and share marketing information.

Who's milking the e-business cash cow today?

Travel is the Web's biggest business sector, accounting for 50% of all business on the Internet. The industry generated \$1 billion in revenue last year through 30,000 travel-themed Web sites.

But the profit motive is drawing all sectors towards e-business solutions; on-line commerce generally offers 4% higher margins. Consider this: an Internet order costs 66% less to process than a phone order, and a website can make sales 24 hours a day. Arguably, you could bring your prices down while pushing customer service standards up. And still make more money.

IBM is helping thousands of businesses across every industry to become successful e-businesses. Here are just a few real life examples.

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e-business

last year to over £120 billion by the millenium. Less obvious, but with greater potential, is the market for business-to-business e-commerce. PC Week predicts that goods purchased on-line by businesses will grow from £4.8 billion last year to over £198 billion by 2002.

So where does that leave your business? How can you hope to grab your slice of the action?

It's time to add {e} to your business.

On-line consumer shopping is the most obvious e-business opportunity. To get there means setting up your e-business to handle transactions. Safely.

(Even cybercustomers need reassurance before they'll send credit card details over the Net.)

That's why IBM, working in collaboration with VISA and MasterCard helped establish the SETTM (Secure Electronic Transactions) standard for Internet bank card security. It's also why IBM developed Net.Commerce as the world's first merchant server based on SET 1.0.

Net.Commerce allows your company to sell products directly from your website. It lets you showcase your product line, even tailor presentation

Case Study 1: French wholesaler Supervox is servicing trade customers on the Web. This "electronic catalogue" is expected to generate annual turnover of £4.8 million.

Case Study 2: We helped the Swiss Railways build one of the first on-line rail ticket sales services. Customers can book and safely pay for tickets from anywhere.

Case Study 3: We helped merchants from the Principality of Monaco create a cybermall, offering an exclusive range of luxury goods to a worldwide market. The simple truth is, there are as many possibilities with e-business as there are businesses.

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The IBM Web site has plenty of e-business tales to tell. And, we trust, plenty of useful insights.

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The future of your business starts here.



Solutions for a small planet

Court in the act of writing

London's Royal Court is not only home to the best of new British writing, it's now playing host to all of Europe too. Paul Taylor outlines the cordial intent behind the New European Writers' Season.

It has passed into theatrical mythology that it took a British production (at the National Theatre) to alert Broadway to the existence and merits of *Angels in America*, a play that the US now recognises as a contemporary classic of its indigenous stage. Tony Kushner's epic had at least been composed on home ground, though, and it had had a San Francisco premiere. What Britain gave it was the level of recognition it deserved, superb production values and a high profile.

Now compare the case of the young Spanish dramatist, David Planell, whose comedy *Bazaar* is about to be produced as part of the Royal Court's ambitious New European Writers' Season (a season which opens tonight with a French play, Christophe Pellet's *One More Wasted Year*). When Planell first came to the Court's annual International Summer School in 1995, he had never written a piece for theatre, let alone had one staged.

His background was in television, where one of his deeply unenviable back jobs was choosing the clips and writing the linking material for a Spanish Jeremy Beadle on a *You Have Been Framed*-type series. It is the farcical desire to re-shoot fake footage of a real-life bike accident (and so clean up on the two million pesetas

prize money for winning clips) that animates *Bazaar*, a very funny three-hander about the hazards of cultural integration, featuring two of Madrid's Moroccan immigrant community and a white-trash Spaniard.

This first piece for the stage has recently garnered the Best Comedy Award in Spain, played a 2,000-seater theatre there and gone on a major tour. But that sequence is, in fact, deceptive. The Court had already programmed John Clifford's translation into its 97/8 season before Planell's play was picked up in Spain and it is safe to say that *Bazaar* would not exist in the form it does - or with its zingy, heightened speech rhythms - if its author had not attended that Summer School or if the Court, in the past four years, had not set up its careful network of foreign-exchange programmes (the longest of which is with the Deutsches Theater, Berlin).

Planell's piece illustrates, therefore, a key feature of this season (which includes, as well as three full productions, programmes of rehearsed readings and context-providing seminars). The main items are not the result of some European shopping spree, raiding the foreign supermarkets of their established best buys. They are the result of sustained development work by the Court itself.

The International Summer School began in the lean, mean Eighties as a way - and people are pretty frank about this - of making easy money for the cash-strapped Court. Like one of those well-heeled EFL colleges that bask in the lucrative shadow of Oxford or Cambridge, the students then were mostly rich American kids. In the past few years, though, under Elyse Dodgson, the theatre-

mother-like head of the Court's international department, and with new financial input from the British Council, the School has become a thriving place where aspiring writers and directors from countries that have no new-writing culture to speak of can come into close working contact with a culture specifically devoted to developing new work.

Listening to the enthusiasts of this scheme and of the various two-way exchange programmes, you sometimes feel that it would take the novelist's pen of a David Lodge to do justice to the whole thing. There are stories of Elyse Dodgson and the Court's artistic director, Stephen Daldry, having to lie down together on the floor of the taxi that was smuggling them across the border between Israel and Palestine - surely the only time anyone has ever traversed the border in quite that posture in search of new writing.

There are tales of Third World participants having fits when treated to their first dose of good old stage-depicted homosexuality. And many students, you reckon, leave the course knowing the meaning of "rumpy pump" in more than one language. Some cross-fertilisations of the cultural type can also make you smile. Coming from a poetic, non-character-led playwriting scene, David Planell found his voice by listening to vibrant Anglo-American voices like that of Jez (Moj) Butcherworth. But he also fell under the spell of Nigel Williams, whose ill-fated *Harry and Me* he is currently translating into Spanish. You wonder whether the Court should have this last on its list of proud achievements.

The New European Writers' Season and the work and phi-

losophy behind it are fraught with risks and difficulties. But having had access to this year's scripts and talked to some of the participants, I'm convinced that it is precisely because it is exploratory and full of open-ended opportunity - and unsure of success - that it is worth doing. The whole question of how cultures perceive/misperceive and present/misrepresent each other is thrown right on to the centre of the table.

How, for example, do you communicate to an English audience a play like Dea Lohr's *Stranger's House*, which in the original is written mostly in the subjunctive, wrapping the events in a strange hypotheticality, and in Hoch-Deutsch, for which there is no equivalent linguistic register? Does the mere fact of lumping writers together in national categories, like some Olympic swimming team, make us too ready to spot pre-occupations in them we have already decided are representative? For example, is *Stranger's House* quite as quintessentially "about the guilt of the survivor" as we would like to think?

Graham Whybrow, the Court's literary manager, is persuasive that you can't prematurely abstract new plays from the theatrical and political context that gave them their first lease of life. Hence the value of exchange programmes which enable people to see the production aesthetics you could never deduce from the page. He cites the work of Christoph Marthaler (whose *Mixx* and *Stunde Null* have since been seen at LIFT) as an exciting demonstration that you can create a stark, compelling piece of theatre without needing a play.

Just how different a the-



Writes of passage: Christophe Pellet's *'One More Wasted Year'* opens the Royal Court's New European Writers' Season tonight.

Photograph: Geraint Lewis

er might quail, pondering how you would translate a typical line like "Wer a shite-heap a shaped up shit wat sum pisshead blew life inter" back into the original.

One telling feature of our three-cornered meeting was that the two German playwrights clearly weren't acquainted nearly as well as two equivalent English dramatists would be: they spent a fair bit of time arguing with each other about the best strategy for improving a theatrical landscape where a dramatist is expected to hand over a play to the ego of the director and then effectively vanish; where there's no meeting place for playwrights; where (despite the fact that there's no separation in Germany between publisher and agent) there isn't a culture of reading plays in book form and thus extending their influence; and where audiences, reared on the latest interpretation of the classics, will tend to ask of a new play not "What is it about?" but "How was it done?"

For various reasons too complicated to go into here, Schneider and her Theater Neuen Typs group argue for secession. Bukowski for pragmatic collaboration. They will be able to continue that dialogue in December when, in what is a tribute to the current season and the philosophy behind it, they will meet again at the Royal Court.

Booking: 0171-365 5000

Mold and cast are both in good Hands

As ex-RSC director Terry Hands boldly launches his new Theatre Clwyd company with four new productions in as many days, Jeffrey Wainwright hails a new Welsh national theatre in the making.

One sometimes hears tell of a strain of jaundice afflicting regional theatre directors which takes the form of a fixed belief that actors can only be seduced beyond the circumference of 0171 when they are in such a state of penury that their mobile phones are about to be repossessed. Even then they would play Lear or Cleopatra for three weeks max, all passed in mortal terror of missing the chance of a voice-over for Tweets.

Terry Hands is clearly not susceptible to this age, for, having taken over the directorship of Theatre Clwyd, he has planned an inaugural season

that stretches to invisibility current conceptions of the art of possible casting. He has gathered a cast of 24 actors in Mold to mount four initial stagings - all given their national openings last week - to be followed in the New Year by a new Christmas show and two further productions: a rare revival of David Rudkin's memorable *Afore Night Come*, and a new play. These will all run in repertory throughout next spring.

It is not difficult to see that Hands is reviving the halcyon spirit of the RSC in this enterprise - a long-standing company of actors engaged in a variety of work which they can continue to develop, instead of having to stop just as they are reaching their potential. For the regular audience, there is that now rare but inestimable pleasure of seeing actors in utterly different roles within a few nights. And the actors get to live in Mold, which has hills and parking.

The *Rape of the Fair Country* is a shrewd inclusion in the first

wave. Adapted here by one of the company members, Manon Eames, the late Alexander Cordell's tale of iron and blood set in the newly industrialising cauldron of South Wales is a company show that strikes some strong bass strings for its audience. It is directed by the theatre's new associate director, Tim Baker, and the style owes a good deal to the contemporary model of novel adaptation where the narrative voice is tossed swiftly among the characters, and not a little to the marching-into-the-footlights stir of *Les Misérables*.

But the powerful story of Iestyn Mortimer's initiation from the age of nine into the brutal world of the early iron foundries is forcefully and movingly told. There is unexpected complexity, too, in the Mortimer family's split attitudes to their labour, with the patriarchal Dada (a bravura performance from Ifan Huw Dafydd) carrying machismo into masochism in his faithfulness to his



Horse play: Theatre Clwyd's *'Equus'*

masters and the work ethic, while his daughter, Morfydd (Vivien Parry) espouses Christianity. Mark Bailey's spectacular set is dominated by a tramway gantry which is the site and emblem of the workers' suffering, and Nick Beadle lights it with the vivid flare of the ironworks.

Yet the most inspiring aspect of the show is that Rhys Miles Thomas, as Iestyn, not only delivers a characterisation of quick-footed charm, energy and poignancy from child to man, but seems to embody the whole company effort in his performance. It is not often that one sees an actor so palpably lifted and inspired as he is by the end of the evening.

Impressive work by yet younger actors helps distinguish Terry Hands's own production of Peter Shaffer's *Equus*. Oliver Ryan is in his first professional season; he begins his portrayal of the disturbed boy who has just blinded several horses, and whose defiant alienation is expressed by shrieking advertising

images, as though he is having an epileptic seizure through the body. He doesn't quite maintain this level, but then, because of the essentially recapitulatory nature of the play, which seeks to show how he came to this pitch, the character doesn't have much scope to move forward. But in their love scene he and Siwan Morris - another assured and distinctive debutant - achieve an edgy and believable tenderness. The older head here is the distinguished silver of Frank Grimes, as the boy's psychiatrist. He has the unenviable task of carrying much of the play's addressed narration - a task Shaffer wisely delegated to secondary characters in *Amadeus* - as well as its philosophising. There is barely space to register his own dissolution as well, but Grimes manages all this with clarity.

However, the main attraction of *Equus* remains the sheer theatricality of its horrifying central image and of the mimed presence of the horses them-

selves. Hands, who has also designed the lighting, and Mark Bailey empty the large stage to place the action on a raked disc on which varying circles and rectangles of light are focused from above. The white "horses" are elevated on to stainless steel bunks and their horses' heads framed of the same material. It is an austere but wonderful use of the space, and shows off the play's strengths to perfection.

These are early days, but the immediate impact made by these shows (*Abigail's Party* and *Entertaining Mr Sloane* are playing in the theatre's smaller space) is hugely encouraging. Under Terry Hands's direction here is a theatre not resigned to putting on a this-theater-series, but forging a long-term body of work as a company. Already it looks like a national company for Wales, and if the promise can be fulfilled, it will be a beacon to British theatre at large.

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Playing to full houses by the seaside

In the week in which the Royal Shakespeare Company announced a £1.6m deficit, Allen Saddler assesses the cost-effectiveness of the company's new Plymouth residency.

With less than two weeks to go of the RSC's first Plymouth residency, it's clear that the season has been an outstanding success. Ticket sales at the Theatre Royal are up on the same period last year, when the theatre was presenting what is known as "popular fare". Ninety per cent attendance figures are reported for studio shows in *The Drum* and at the custom-built new space created within the Pavilions leisure centre complex. Total audiences for the RSC residency to date number 39,000, mostly coming from the Plymouth region, but with a healthy 5 per cent coming from as far as Wolverhampton and even Stockholm.

Roughly one in 14 Plymouth citizens have seen an RSC performance this season - an amazing response from a low-wage,

high-unemployment region with problems of geography and access. Theatre-going is not made easy in the South-west: when the curtain comes down, there is no public transport out of Plymouth. It is as if the City Fathers have closed the gates and called a 7.30pm curfew. And yet Plymouth boasts the best-attended regional theatre in the country.

The RSC's declared aim that nobody should be more than 45 minutes away from one of its productions is hardly feasible for people living in Penzance or Falmouth, and yet theatre-goers from the far West have driven the hundred miles. And enthusiasts from Barnstaple and Bideford have tackled across Exmoor and Dartmoor to get to the RSC.

It's perhaps all the more remarkable, given the short history of theatre in Plymouth. Twenty-one years ago, when the RSC began its Newcastle residency, there was no theatre in Plymouth - though there was a Plymouth Theatre Company, a shoestring operation (funded by the council and South West Arts) which performed in school halls, drill halls and other ad hoc spaces. When the idea of building a new theatre

was first mooted, it was fiercely resisted in the Council Chamber, and only received the nod by a whisker. A barrage of anti-theatre propaganda continued while the building took place.

Plymouth is no stranger to the Bard. The Theatre Royal opened in 1962 with Peter Dew's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; it has played host to Michael Bogdanov's marathon *Henrys* (three plays in one day) and to a highly experimental *Tempest* by Anthony Quayle's Compass Theatre, with Sir Anthony as a world-weary Prospero. But it has not been immersed in the Bard, until now.

Of the RSC's offerings, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, starring Leslie Phillips and Susannah York, has been the star attraction, with *Much Ado* and *Hamlet* following close behind. But there have also been 80 per cent audiences for *Cymbeline*, while other difficult plays such as *Camino Real* and *Little Eyolf*, in the new Pavilions theatre, have had healthy support. Audiences speak of the quality of Adrian Noble's production, "Turgid," said one of Isen's *Little Eyolf*, "but wonderfully executed."

For an Arts Council-funded

theatre to be hosting the Arts Council-funded RSC is piling subsidy on subsidy. The top seat price in Plymouth is £24 (it's £30 in Newcastle). But, without the subsidy, the price would be nearly three times as high. Given

that the RSC's Plymouth residency offers many in the South-west our only chance to see this "national" theatre at first hand, let's hope the company's deficit doesn't stop it coming back next year.

THE INDEPENDENT

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Call cost 50p per minute at all times. Winner picked at random after time close 19 November 1997. Usual Newspaper Publishing rules apply. Editor's decision is final.

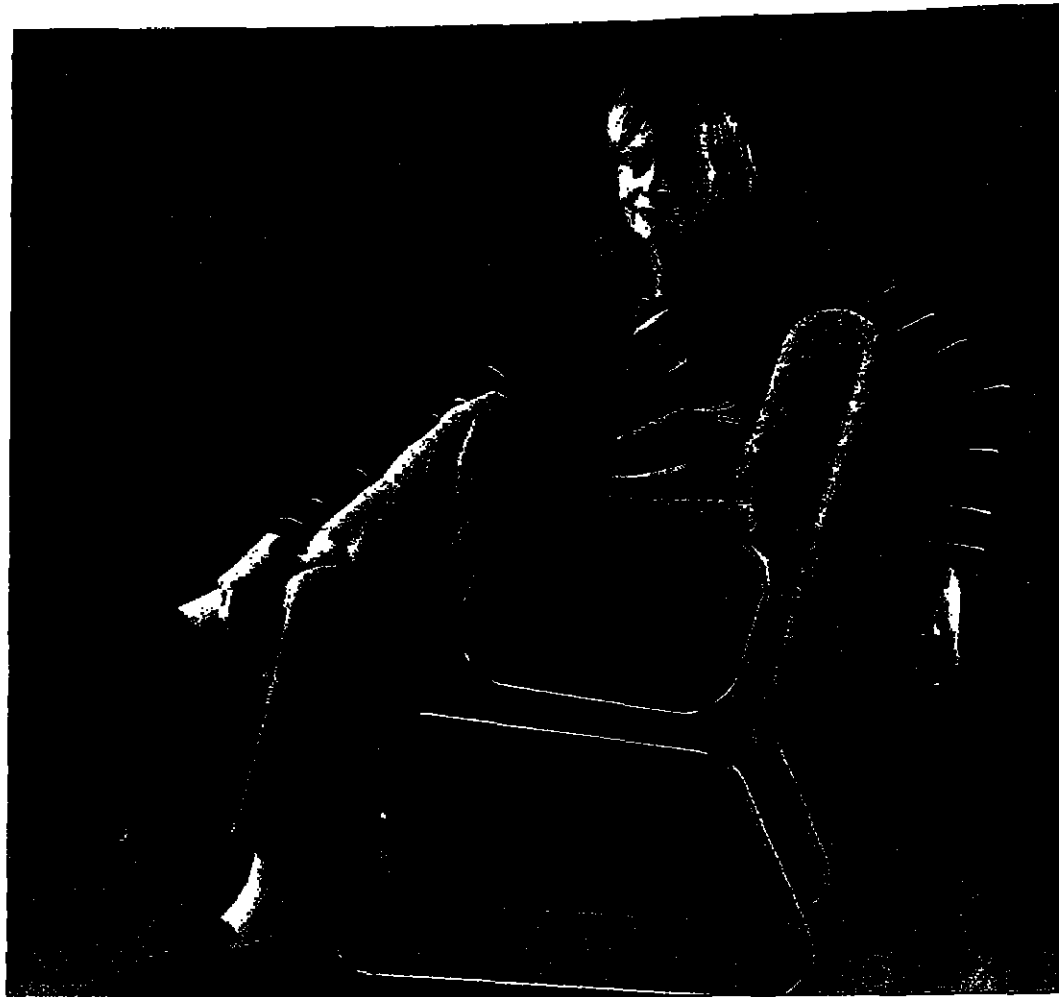
19/FASHION

Fiftysomething, and fabulous in her fashion



Single-breasted glitter jacket, £741, and black satin palazzo pants, £286, both by Pearce Fionda, from Selfridges, Oxford Street, London W1 (enquiries, 0171-609 6470)

Photographer: Andrew Lamb. Stylist: Charlie Harrington. Hair and make-up: Helen Bannan at Mandy Cookley



Beige-and-cream-striped top, £99; caramel-coloured textured trousers, £129, both by Episode, 172 Regent Street, London W1, Fenwicks, New Bond Street, London W1, and stores nationwide (enquiries, 0171-439 3561); striped cardigan, £119, by Fenn Wright and Manson, from Fenwicks, as before; buttermilk trouser socks, £3.95 by Hue, from major department stores nationwide (enquiries, 0171-436 4091); tan suede loafers, £95.50, by Russell and Bromley, 24-25 New Bond Street, London W1, and stores nationwide (enquiries, 0171-629 6903)

Jan de Villeneuve is 54. She was a cover girl in the Seventies and looks great today. We took her through the collections of some British designers who make clothes for women rather than girls.

Jan de Villeneuve turned up for our shoot wearing a long black jacket and matching trousers by Agnès B, a plain white T-shirt and a pair of Converse trainers. She looks as cool and modern as her 18- and 22-year-old daughters. Now that she's in her fifties, she still has the attitude that anything goes.

From the roll of clothes in the studio, we chose two relaxed looks for day by Nicole Farhi and Episode; a versatile and easy-to-wear black dress by Betty Jackson; and for evenings a glamorous tailored jacket and palazzo pants by Pearce Fionda. The Nicole Farhi suit and scarf were closest to her own personal style, and she loved the drama of the Betty Jackson dress, with its free panel tying at the shoulder. The power-shouldered jacket by Pearce Fionda was perhaps most out of character to her own relaxed style. "It's funny to see these shoulder pads coming back in. But as you get older, you tend to wear things that are more comfortable."



Grey trousers, £199, and jacket, £449; dusky pink, beaded camisole, £199; grey chiffon beaded scarf, £149; salmon bead-trimmed cardigan, all by Nicole Farhi, 158 New Bond Street, London W1, (enquiries, 0171-499 8368)



Black jersey dress, £286, by Betty Jackson, 311 Brompton Road, London SW3 (enquiries, 0171-589 7884); black satin shoes, £269, by Michel Perry, available at Pied à Terre, 31 Old Bond Street, London W1

Vivienne Westwood is 56, but don't let that worry you

Forty per cent of the UK's population are 50 and over. As fashion designers increasingly concentrate on youth, women in their prime are quietly perfecting their own style. Maxine Boersma watches money, taste and maturity in magical combination.

Anne Boersma was 60 this year. She is a grandmother, and a svelte size 12. Her retirement has meant that she can exercise regularly, and she feels comfortable with her own personal style.

In 1992, she purchased the essential Pucci leggings in Italy. In 1994, she wore "the great white shirt". This year, she is commissioning her personal dressmaker to create an anergine velvet lounge suit.

Based in Northallerton, North Yorkshire, Anne enjoys trips to health farms and regularly shops in Leeds and London. London has Whistles and Betty Jackson; Leeds brings Harvey Nichols.

Anne has always enjoyed fashion, but as she gets older she is less content to put up with clothes that aren't exactly right.

"In the Fifties and Sixties I loved buying clothes - Audrey Hepburn skirts and polo necks, Elizabeth Taylor Cleopatra make-up. I wanted items that were a mixture of sophistication and fun. I had a green sports car in the Fifties, and dressed to be noticed in it. Elizabeth Taylor is still a role model.

"It's so much easier for older women to look good now - I used to think my mother was

old at 30! I lost some interest in fashion as my children were growing up, but then I started to borrow my daughter's clothes from Warehouse. I'm lucky to be able to afford designer clothes now, and a dressmaker. As far as shopping is concerned, I really love Whistles."

Undoubtedly, loyal older customers now have more money to spend on fashion than ever before. Saga Services conducted a survey among its extensive customer database of people aged over 50. According to Phil Loney, sales and marketing director:

"The 'Grey Market' is one of the most rapidly growing sectors. The UK has an ageing population: 18 million people aged over 50, currently representing 40 per cent of the adult population.

By the year 2021 the number of people in this age group will have risen to 23.3 million - 47 per cent of the adult population. Therefore, they are an extremely important group, and represent some of the country's most experienced and discerning consumers."

Ruth Corbett is the editor of *Chic* magazine. "For the woman who wasn't born yes-

terday". She agrees that female customers over 50 have greater spending power.

"From the response we get, the 'grey pound' is incredibly strong. There is a real spending force. These women have always gone for classical clothes, they're not style victims. It's now also hip to have older models. We've just done a feature on mature models."

Marie Claire's fashion director, Sarah Walter, believes that despite extremes in fashion, "the general movement is wearable. People are doing very few minis - they are mainly just back on the knee. Many prominent fashion editors in America are over 50 themselves."

So, too, are many of our designers. Vivienne Westwood is 56. Christopher di Pietro, her sales and marketing manager, believes her clothes are suited to women of all ages.

"We have a lot of women over 60 as customers. There is a great gamut of styles for them. Some are classic suits in Forties and Fifties styles. The women who come in to buy these used to buy couture in Paris."

Maria Dalton chose to visit an image consultant at 70. She

wore New Look outfits in the early Fifties. Realising that she could not afford designer wear now, she followed the consultant's advice and developed a capsule wardrobe of navy, cream and black. Her daughter Helen, 35, who is a teacher in Worcester, admires her mother's style and believes that the basic wardrobe means she can be more adventurous with accessories and make-up. "My mother may be in her seventies," she says, "but she beat me to Chanel's Rouge Noir."

Olivia Smith is an Essex-based image consultant with many clients over 60. She advises these women to develop a basic wardrobe, and to wear something soft around their faces:

"My oldest client is over 80 years old, and I was recommended to her by her daughter. By 60, women should be developing their own personal style. My advice is to be yourself - 100 per cent."

Anita Pallenberg, Jibby Beane, Tina Turner, Lauren Bacall - are all women who have developed their own personal look that has taken them beyond their middle years in style. The older they get, the more confident they look. If the

micro-mini doesn't suit this season, (and if you have the legs, why shouldn't it?) the suit with shoulder pads will. The good news is that the Eighties Power Look is back, inspired by sixtiesomething Joan Collins.

The design duo Pearce Fionda started in business believing their market to be the twenty-to-thirtysomething woman, but they soon latched on to the reality that, according to Andrew Fionda, she is "older in years but younger in mentality. She may be 50 but she feels 30. There's no way she's going to get into a polyester pleated number."

Lauren Hutton is a shining example. "Fifty-year-old-plus women are more style-obsessed than fashion-obsessed. They've found their own style, and are not interested in fashion gimmicks."

For the designers, age is not a factor. They are aware that more mature women are more likely to be able to afford their clothes than younger women. One of the highlights of their year was dressing 52-year-old Francesca Annis for the Academy Awards.

"She wanted drop-dead, sexy glamour," says Fionda. "She's got a fierce body."

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BELOVED AND BONK

Diary of a divorce



After a couple of weeks of cold turkey on the weeping front, I'm like a reformed alcoholic frightened to open the drinks' cabinet. Not only do I avoid situations that previously had me awash with running mascara in seconds, I am now actually scared of them. So I've become phobic about all sorts of ridiculous details of my life: opening certain cupboards where Beloved's clothes once hung is now impossible; aisle number 12 in my local supermarket where his favourite biscuits lurk has to be avoided. But seeing Beloved as a bad habit like nail-biting or smoking 20 a day is beginning to work and the addiction of nearly two decades is starting to recede.

Of course my kids' addiction to their father is lifelong, especially as every two weeks they have another dose of Daddy to keep them hooked. Off they go of a Friday night, sky high with nervousness at seeing Beloved. They return on Sunday after a welter of cinema-going, zoo visits and clothes-buying, full of fury. They positively fizz with all the normal bad behaviour that they have spent the weekend repressing. Because now that Daddy doesn't live with them any more they aren't show him how angry they are with him for leaving in case he stops loving them altogether.

So every other Sunday night my life as punchbag begins. It's the fat lady and the corset principle: you can hold it in one place but it has to spill out somewhere. Post-Beloved weeks are a war zone, as Bunny and Buster let it all out over me and each other. I'm no good at peace-making and negotiation. If I'd have been a senior Blue Beret in Bosnia there would be no one left alive there now. So every door in the house is either loose on its hinges or missing a catch, so often are they kicked, slammed and bust open. I am subjected to the kind of creative cheek, defiance and cynicism I thought I would avoid until they hit their teens. After one particularly traumatic evening - when Buster had banged his head rhythmically against the wall for 10 minutes and Bunny had sworn herself to imminent suicide - Buster summed it up for me. "It's like when a mine goes off. Mummy," he said, "you have to poke the ground all around really hard to make sure it's safe." So that's how it works... I am the ground that gets poked and pulverised because of the land mine that Beloved left off in their lives. Ref!!!

It's during weeks like this that I wonder who benefits from these jolly weekends with Beloved. I also have unmaternal fantasies about turning up on Beloved and Bonk's doorstep in a few years' time with my by-then teenage-droopy kids. "Darling," I shall say to Beloved, "I know what a hardship being separated from your children has been, so I've decided to stop being selfish and let you have a turn. Here they are. I'm going on a world tour for 10 years. Bye."

OK, yeah, yeah, I know the theory: in-the-long-run-I'll-be-glad-that-I-was-left-with-the-kids. That my relationship-with-them-will-be-better. That Beloved-is-just-a-likely-to-die-a-lonely-old-dog. I know. It's just that sometimes the unfairness of it all gets to me. He jumped off the family bus and left me to drive downhill at a furious pace, with no breaks when I need to sleep or go to the loo. How can you start a new life when you can't even take your eye off the road without going straight for a lamppost?

But really what am I bellyaching about? That he's not here to share the parental burden? When has he ever? He's a victim of the industry in which he works. I know loads of Media Boys whose wives and children operate like single-parent families. My mates and I used to joke about our husbands: "The only way they'll see these kids is if we get divorced." And the bone-chilling bit about that is that it's true. If I put the every-other-weekend scenario on the scales against Beloved's pre-break-up "quality parent time", I know which way they'd tip.

Stevie Morgan

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She's strictly an e-mail female



She's been dismissed as an eccentric, a lonely spinster who lives on the Net. But few fly as high - or as often - as Esther Dyson

Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

Esther Dyson is at the cutting edge, the queen of the Internet. Her ideas make things happen: Bill Clinton knows that, so does Bill Gates. See her CV and she sounds scary as hell. But Ann Treneman had her one-to-one and she was not afraid.

Esther Dyson is one of those women to whom very important people pay attention. People such as the Bills (Gates and Clinton). Her high-tech conference attracts everyone who is anyone in America and her opinion is enough to make or break any high-tech venture. I was not surprised to hear that after our interview she would be meeting Marjorie Scardino, head of Pearson. What would they talk about? "Oh Marjorie's got a little idea up her sleeve and so we'll talk about that. Last night at dinner we talked about Rupert. In my industry everyone talks about Bill. In yours, it's Rupert."

She smiles and the 46-year-old looks about 10 years younger. I'm not capable of smiling back, however, because I am terrified. This is because, on paper, Esther Dyson is terrifying. The *New York Times* has said she is the most powerful woman in the Net-erati. *Vanity Fair* ranks her as one of the 50 most influential people in the New Establishment. When powerful people want to know something

about the future and the Internet, they know who to e-mail.

It takes a nervous minute or two to figure out that Esther Dyson is much nicer in person than on paper. True, her father is a brilliant physicist and she went to Harvard at age 16. True, she does run a company devoted to emerging technology and writes the industry's most influential newsletter. In addition she logs 250,000 air miles a year, speaks fluent Russian and received a \$1 million advance for her new book. But she also has a handshake that is as light as a feather, a nice way about her and a wicked sense of humour. Her dress sense is supremely relaxed: for our meeting she is wearing jeans, pearl earrings and trainers. Actually she didn't wear the trainers for long. Within minutes she has taken them off. She did this in the hotel lobby yesterday and a porter asked her to put them back on.

She thinks this is funny. She laughs as she speaks, rather softly and slowly for a New Yorker. "Yes, I do like to see myself as approachable. Some people are just so scared of me that they don't notice that I am approachable." I pretend I do not know what she is talking about and ask her why they are so scared. "Oh you know, they have read all this stuff about how influential I am." She shrugs. "You know it's my job to be approachable. I represent the little guy. That is what I do. I shine the spotlight on little things whether it is a crackpot new idea or an obscure little country or a cute little company."

At the moment, though, it is her job to sell her book. *Release 2.0* is a guidebook for the digital world for Everyman (and woman) and Esther is in London for two days to talk about it. Her schedule is jammed. When we met yesterday at 10am she had already been for a swim and answered some of the 67 e-mails she had received since the night before. She is a whirlwind. Last Thursday she had dinner with a friend in California and since then she's been to been to Seattle, New York, Zurich, Kiev and here. I say that she is a living e-mail. "I do travel a lot," she says with another laugh.

Swimming is the only constant in her life. Every day, no matter where she is, she plunges a pool for an hour and she's got the chlorine hair to prove it. "I feel as if I'm getting unkinked somehow. I think about what I did yesterday - how I screwed up or what I did right - and I think of what I'm going to do next." Occasionally she brings pen and paper to poolside and jumps out to jot down a thought or two. "But I don't like to do that. I don't get mystical about it but it's the time for thinking about things overall, in context, rather than making lists."

So how does she actually describe herself? "Well I wrote the book, in part, to have a business card really. Now it could say Esther Dyson, author of *Release 2.0*. When I cross a border into a country, I have to say what I am. Sometimes I say financier, sometimes I put software writer, sometimes I write author and some-

times entrepreneur. I'm sort of like the Net, I'm decentralised."

Esther Dyson sees the Internet as something that is going to shape every aspect of our lives. "I'm not in love with my machines. I am in love with what they let me do. It's the capabilities that I like." She is an optimist: for her the Net can be used to better our lives, to enhance our relationships and to make the little guy more important. The balance of power will tip more towards the individual and Esther's message is that business, government, education and even parents should be ready for it. Her book is full of great, swooping ideas and little anecdotes that make you see that she really is talking about people, not computers. The reviews have not been ecstatic. "They don't really take on what I am saying. They say I'm being naive and optimistic but they do not even pay attention to ideas like decentralisation. Large corporations and governments are facing an erosion of their power and authority, not to one person or thing in particular but to everything else in general. Everything is much faster and more fluid."

Few people - and even fewer computer types - are able to talk like this and you can see why the Bills of this world seek her out. Perhaps, I say, she should see herself as a philosopher. She grimaces. "I try not to be too pompous. I see myself as a court jester. The important thing is to take other people seriously and not yourself." Esther Dyson is a great fan of sig-

files on e-mails. These are automatic signature lines that say who you are, give a physical address and perhaps a motto or two. Her motto is "Always make new mistakes!" She likes people who are big enough to say they were wrong. She freely admits to making many mistakes: in investments, in interviews, in life. "I can be pretty rough on people in my office. You tend to do that to people who can't answer back and fortunately my business partner was able to say: 'Esther, shut up and grow up. Just because you're unhappy don't inflict it on us.'"

All of this is most interesting because Esther Dyson is often portrayed as a lonely spinster oddball who spends her existence toiling away in a tremendously messy office in New York. She herself has said that she lives on the Net but clearly this is not true. She lives on a plane and spends her life meeting people, talking, networking. She is portrayed as an eccentric who doesn't have a home phone but I notice that she manages to use my mobile pretty adroitly when need be.

She not only speaks for the little guys, she sees the world as they do. When talking of a dinner she was invited to, she added: "They told me I was on table nine and I thought, 'I hope I don't end up with a bunch of dogs.' I laughed and thought that it is doubtful that she ever would."

'Release 2.0: A Design for Living in the Digital Age' by Esther Dyson is published by Viking (£15.99).

No sex please, we're twenty

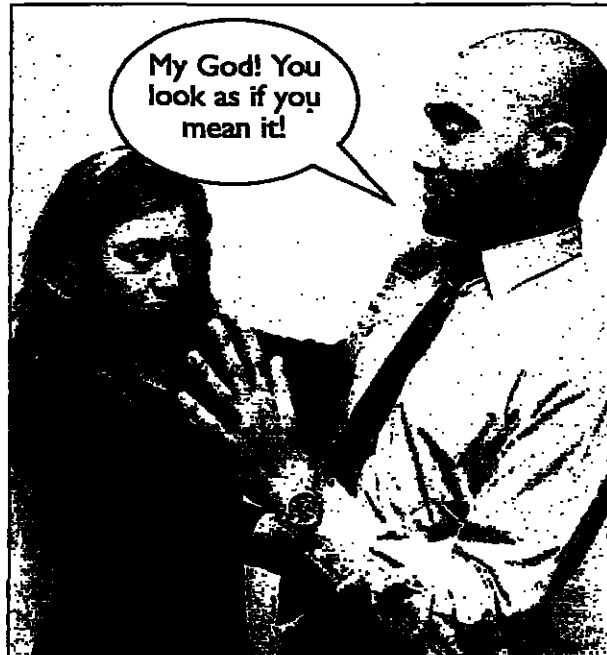
This week The Independent has revealed a lot about young Britain, not least about its attitudes to sex. It should be meaningful, they say, or forget it. Did you say forget it? asks Glenda Cooper

"It doesn't matter how liberal you are, because by the time we are in our twenties we are fed up with meaningless sex." Damian Julienne, 19, from Birkenhead, told the 2020 Vision survey - the biggest ever conducted of young people - yesterday.

Oh really? What are we to make of the youth of today? That they'd rather be sitting quietly at home revising for exams, in a stable relationship, and saving for their pension rather than attending drug-crazed orgies and being gratuitously rude to their parents? So they say.

"Hub, these ungrateful teenagers. Meaningless sex? Chance would be a fine thing," snorted one colleague yesterday. It seems that today's youth are more responsible than their forebears. They - and I - blame it on their extensive sex education, which tells them all they need to know about sex so early in life that they end up agreeing not with the late poet laureate John Betjeman (who said his only regret was that he hadn't had more sex) but with the fourth earl of Chesterfield, who thought that "the pleasure is momentary, the position ridiculous and the expense damnable".

Actually that's a bit unfair on Damian and pals who do not condemn sex per se. ("My friend's got three kids and he's got another on the way. But since he turned 17, he's settled down with his girlfriend. I suppose that's what we all want to do.") But you just have to understand that you are only allowed to have sex if it's



meaningful. Erica Jong zip it up. But what is meaningless sex? Shut up, the person at the back who said "wonderful". But it does tempt one to misquote Woody Allen, "Is sex meaningless? Only if it's done right."

Of course one of the reasons that has been put forward as to why the British are so coy about defining - or achieving - meaningless sex is just the fact that

they are no good at it. Talking about the new American film *One Night Stand* (you get the idea what it's about), the *Evening Standard* concluded yesterday that the British answer to it was *Brief Encounter* - the film about extra-marital sex in which, er, no extra-marital sex takes place. Mind you, there are a lot of trains instead - which probably sounds far more ex-

citing to the average man than the hassles of an affair.

Asking people what meaningless sex is like is a bit like enquiring about headlice. Everyone knows a friend who's had it but, no, they've never had it themselves. But that doesn't mean they don't think they know what it is. Intensive research suggests the following: that it's when you a) weren't in love with the person you slept with (woman's definition); b) couldn't remember her name the next day (man's definition); c) not perfect but better than nothing (desperate man's definition).

But is that good enough in the post-Freudian age? Keith Beach, a clinical psychologist and psychotherapist, brings other insights to bear. "Every aspect of behaviour has a meaning. Freud taught us that things which appear to have no meaning and were not connected were always connected in the human mind... So we may just imagine that it's phys-

ical gratification or psychological gratification but I really think we have to ask what we mean by meaningful. Or, indeed, what we mean by sex."

Er, right. But there's meaningful and meaningless. The young Damian may think it's something that can only happen in a long-term relationship and it's an expression of intimacy and love.

But Madeleine St John knows about long-term relationships and how they can offer meaningless sex, but big time. In her Booker-shortlisted book, *The Essence of the Thing*, she describes how Jonathan tells his live-in partner Nicola one Thursday that it's over and he wants them to split up. Nicola is aghast. "Can you remember," she says, "when you last made love to me? ... last Monday night. Three nights before you told me to get on my bike. Which means that in only three days, just three days..." "Oh that," Jonathan replies, "that meant nothing."

The Arab world's problems are more fundamental than religion



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At first glance the slaughter in Luxor seems triumphant vindication of the Huntington thesis. A few years ago, Professor Samuel of that name, of Harvard University, wrote a celebrated book predicting that after the demise of Communism, conflicts would be generated by clashes between civilisations, first and foremost between the Christian West and Islam. And now 58 Swiss, German, British and Japanese tourists have been gunned down by Islamic fundamentalists in the Valley of the Kings, just when the Arab world is seething at America's refusal to bring Israel to heel, and the firepower of *USS Nimitz* and *George Washington* is pointed squarely in the direction of Saddam Hussein. Are these not precursors of still worse to come? The short answer is: not necessarily.

Undoubtedly, the mood in the Arab world is as combustible as at any time since the last Arab-Israeli war. But Islamic fundamentalism is caused not by the excesses of Zionism but by the failings of the societies in which it has taken root – from

Algeria to Afghanistan by way, most visibly, of Turkey, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. These failings include poor economic performance and the concentration of wealth in a few hands, manifest corruption and the long-standing inability of most Arab governments to respond to the will of their peoples. Then there is the generational chasm. Across the region the same men have been in power for decades, backed by more or less overt military regimes. Take Colonel Ghaddafi, among the youngest of them: he has ruled Libya for 28 years. Beneath this gerontocracy, however, bubbles a cauldron of youth. More than half the region's population is under 18, far less impressed than their elders by Islam's traditions of respect and deference to those in authority. And their economic prospects are grim. In Egypt itself, for instance, there are 2 million unemployed graduates. Once Nasser's Arab nationalism or Arab socialism would have provided solace. But these movements failed, while communism, that other

refuge for the disaffected, has been terminally discredited. Small wonder the appeal of Islamic fundamentalism.

To these grievances must be added a sense of inferiority – that Islam is in a siding of history, and that the region counts only because of oil and gas. Oil, the Arab world knows full well, was why America put together the coalition to drive Saddam Hussein from Kuwait. And the crushing defeat he suffered, though welcomed at the time by most of the Arab world, has left its own legacy of impotence and humiliation. And here certainly, the Israel factor is important, as Saddam's prestige begins to recover. Why, it is legitimately asked, is he held to the letter of every UN resolution and his suffering people held to the rack of sanctions, while Israel is allowed to ignore similar resolutions, not to mention the Oslo accords, with impunity?

But Israel is only a pretext – or rather a painful scab on a body riddled with a very different disease. The temptation to see the scab as manifestation of the underlying

illness is naturally very strong, and its removal undoubtedly would temporarily reduce the patient's fever. But even a lasting settlement of the Palestinian question will not put the Arab world lastingly to rights. That Islam must do itself.

Curiously perhaps, the most farsighted of Arab statesmen have been two of the oldest of its rulers, the King Hussein of Jordan and Hassan of Morocco, who have partly opened their political systems to admit some elements of opposition. Otherwise, however, a vicious and depressing cycle is setting in. Before Monday's atrocity, Islamic fundamentalism seemed on the ebb in Egypt, and one faction at least was angling for a ceasefire. But these hopes have now been dashed, as was surely the intention of the perpetrators of the massacre. No matter that the overwhelming majority of Egyptians have reacted with horror and outrage to what has happened. President Mubarak has little choice but to respond to the violence of terrorists with the violence of the state. But

repression will only breed more resentment, more despair and more violence. The West in turn will be less inclined than ever to offer the investments and long-term commitment which might help turn the economic tide. Israel's argument that it is the one safe bet in a dangerous region will be more persuasive than ever.

And here we come back to the notion of democracy – not the precise Western model of democracy necessarily, but some mechanism to make regimes more responsive to their subjects. Only in this way will Arab acceptance of Israel be fully legitimised. Even more important, the regimes will be under genuine pressure to provide their people with a decent level of prosperity and social justice – instead of masking their shortcomings by blaming everything on Israel and the West. If so, then the Islamic countries may be able to separate religion and politics, and create the stable secular institutions they so badly need. But as Luxor shows, the immediate prospects are bleak indeed.

Post letters to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number. Fax 0171 293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk. E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

LETTERS

Battle for the BBC

Sir: Rob Brown is right about the battle "for the hearts and minds" of the British viewing public as the digital TV revolution develops (Media, 17 November). The BBC will maintain the loyalty of viewers as long as it shows the better-quality, home-made, peak-time programmes it is renowned for. Readers may care to reflect upon the European Parliament's work in ensuring that the BBC has the means to fight this battle without constraint. The TV Without Frontiers directive insists that broadcasters ensure that 51 per cent of output is of EU origin and of high quality. If this directive is properly implemented, then the BBC will not be forced to "dumb down" and show cheap imported programmes to compete with new channels.

These channels should be obliged to comply quickly in the UK (the directive allows new channels three years to reach 51 per cent). Children's TV illustrates what is at stake for our culture. This month, the Broadcasting Standards Commission voiced alarm at the predominance of low-quality imported cartoons on cable and satellite channels and the impact that this is having on terrestrial stations. This directive offers a solution to this problem.

In addition, following the European Parliament's adoption of my report on the future of Public Service Broadcasters (PSBs), the Amsterdam treaty contains a protocol that protects PSBs from legal attack relating to "unfair" state aid. The BBC has nothing to fear, and it has no excuses for any decline in standards. CAROLE TONGUE MEP (London E, Lab) Iford, Essex

Sir: Your headline "BBC should be killed off, says Channel 5 chief" (13 November) is the opposite of what I said in my speech. I strongly support the BBC: it is the licence fee I object to, and the notion that the two are inextricably linked is a mistake too often made, not least by the BBC's governors and management.

I have been advocating abolition of the compulsory licence fee for 14 years – long before I had anything to do with BSkyB – precisely because I

think it is the biggest obstacle to a brilliant future for the BBC.

The BBC needs to transform its relationship with the viewer, reduce the cost of its basic services to the poorest households, increase its overall revenue, add to the range of its channels and end the growing conflict between its revenue sources: all that can be achieved by switching to subscription funding, but by no other means. DAVID ELSTEIN Chief Executive Channel 5 Broadcasting London WC2

Redesigned churches

Sir: Every generation has made changes inside church buildings. If Colin Wheeler (article, 13 November; letters, 15 November) looks at the interior, rather than the 500-year-old exterior walls of his parish church, he will see evidence of this. Pews were generally intro-

duced in the 17th century, no doubt to cries of "You're cluttering up the lovely space, pandering to softies who can't stand up for a couple of hours." A hundred years ago the massive Georgian pulpit was pushed to one side and a rood screen and reredos erected (or, if you were lucky, the medieval one restored).

These changes reflect changes in theology of worship and our understanding of the ecclesia – the Christian community meeting in worship. Today there is a preference for seats in a semi-circle round a nave altar; rather than worshipping a God out there, we feel it better to worship a God in the midst of us.

Incidentally, it is easier to worship God or appreciate the architectural merits of a building if you're not bursting for a pee. Two members of the congregation at the church where I worship find it necessary to

visit the loo half-way through the service (because of medical conditions). I am glad there are toilet facilities, because it is more important that they can be with us Sunday by Sunday than that Mr Wheeler's aesthetic sensibilities might be offended.

I am neither one of the old ladies nor the T-shirted trendies to whom Mr Wheeler disparagingly refers, but an ordinary member of a congregation who prefers a living centre of worship and evangelism to a museum for dead art. ALAN D SKYES Halifax, West Yorkshire

BSE inquiry

Sir: Dr Stephen Dealler (letters, 15 November) accurately catalogued the errors that led to the BSE crisis. The present government was not in power when the crucial mistakes were made. Several Labour MPs

challenged government policy at the time.

A public inquiry will draw a line under the issue and ensure that the current administration does not become associated with the failings that led to the crisis. For the sake of those who have lost family members to new variant CJD, I hope the Government will act sooner rather than later. MAUREEN TREADWELL Chilton, Hampshire

Sir: Dr Stephen Dealler is entitled to his views on the inadequacy or otherwise of the consultation process involved in the BSE problem, but he is quite wrong to state that "pharmaceutical companies were advised not to research methods of treatment".

Decisions by pharmaceutical companies to seek to develop new therapeutic approaches to any disease are a strategic matter for them alone. No external

body advises companies not to carry out research.

The pharmaceutical industry and the Medical Research Council took the lead earlier this year to meet and discuss how therapeutic advances made by the industry in other related fields, such as Alzheimer's disease, could be adopted. Dr JEFF KIPLING Director of Science and Technology The Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry London SW1

Luxor massacre

Sir: As a Muslim, may I add my condemnation to the many that have been voiced about the slaughter in Egypt on Monday. There can be no excuse for it.

However, this, sadly, might continue to be the case so long as channels for the peaceful expression of political views are denied by the Egyptian gov-

ernment. It is time for all friends of Egypt to start to use their influence with the Egyptian government to widen the franchise of democracy to include all peaceful "Islamic" and other groups. ADNAN SAIF Birmingham

Blair's apology

Sir: Hugh J Thomson (letter, 18 November) suggests that Tony Blair has earned the respect of the public with his apology for the Formula One scandal.

Mr Blair should be judged by his actions, not his words. A two-minute apology does not make up for another broken promise. It is foolish to tell politicians that whatever they do is all right as long as they apologise for it afterwards, whether they are only human or not. DANNY FELDMAN London NW4

Irish in war

Sir: M A Martin (letter, 14 November) does not wear a poppy to honour the dead of two world wars. He takes narrow political views rather than generous ones.

In the Second World War the Irish Free State never declared war on Germany and throughout remained a threat to British survival. The Royal Navy was denied use of Irish ports while German U-boats sailed in Irish waters to attack our life-saving convoys of food and arms. As British cities were devastated by German bombs the lights of Dublin provided a beacon for German bombers, particularly to Merseyside and Glasgow.

I met and was friends with many southern Irishmen in the British Army in the war, but it is true that most of them were mercenaries, rather than ideological soldiers.

JOHN ALDERSON Oatery St Mary, Devon

Sir: M A Martin says there were more "southern" than "northern" Irish battalions in the Battle of the Somme. The figures are 13 battalions from "southern" regiments and 25 from "northern". C T RASON Hordean, Hampshire

Biblical beards

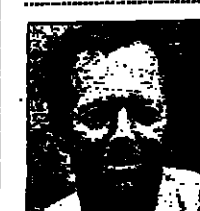
Sir: At the risk of splitting hairs, might I point out to the erudite Mr Jacobson (letter, 14 November) that the Gospel accounts of the passion of Jesus record that he was scourged (and so facilitated the early Christian application to him of Isaiah 50:6 – "I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard.") but do not mention that his beard was pulled out.

Arguments from silence are never convincing, but at first blush this clearly favours the view that Jesus was clean-shaven.

The Rev PETER HAITON Droitwich, Worcestershire

Because of a production error, the first edition of Monday's *Independent* carried a reprint of letters that had appeared last Friday. We apologise to the minority of readers who received that edition.

The new labours of Hercules – 12 ways to restore the voters' faith



MILES KINGTON

When you go to see a Disney film you don't just see clean-cut heroes and fast action, you see a story which is noticeably different from the original as well. Interestingly, the same is true of our new Labour government, where there is a lot of clean-cutness and where the truth changes subtly the whole time...

So why not combine the two? And that's exactly what we have done today in a great new story called: HERCULES: NEW LABOURS!

Once upon a time there was a hero called Hercules who was clean-cut and young and strong and, above all, squeaky clean, and he went to the Oracle and said, "Oracle, I have come for your help, because I want to

make this land prosperous, and fair and equal, and I wish to root out disparity and unfairness, and I want to make the whole of Europe fair and equal, and prosperous, and I pledge that I shall not rest until..."

And the Oracle said: "Yes, yes, yes, you don't have to tell me all this, I can read minds you know. I wouldn't have got this far if I couldn't read minds, it saves a lot of time, especially with politicians. So what can I do for you?"

"Well," said Hercules, "it's a long story, but I accepted some money from someone and it has got me in trouble."

"Give back the money," said the Oracle.

"I have done that, and I am still in trouble."

"Then you must do 12 great tasks and then people will forgive you."

"Gladly," said Hercules, smiling, for he always smiled even when unhappy. "I will gladly do these tasks for I must do all that is in my power to make this land happy and wealthy and above all fair-minded and must drive out sleaze..."

"Give us a break and knock it off," said the Oracle, handing him a parchment. "Now, here is a list of the 12 great tasks and when you have done them you can come and see me again, but if you want my advice, you will go easy on the smiling and the clean-cut speeches, not that it's any of my business!"

The Oracle vanished and Hercules found himself in the

middle of a great empty plain on his first quest, to slay the Nemean lion. And as he walked along, he found the Nemean lion lying dead, where it had been run over, and his faithful companion Mandelae said: "Well, that was a stroke of luck, because now we can put it out that you killed him," and that was the first new labour.

Then he came upon a monster called the NHS or National Hydra Scare, a hideously expensive monster which swallowed up everyone's money and which, as soon as you cut off one head of management, grew another nine regional heads more expensive than the first. And Hercules stared straight at it and said in a loud voice: "I pledge myself to do something

about this." And the Hydra was so surprised it died laughing, and that was the second new labour.

Then he came to the problem of the hunting of the Cerynean hind, but he said there was no time to debate hunting this time round, and that was the third new labour. And then he came to the Erymanthian bore, and he said to it, "Yes, yes, yes, Robin, we all know you've been to Erymanthos to do some trouble-shooting, just don't go on about it – I'll do the boring round here!" and that was the fourth new labour.

Now he came to the racing stables of King Augeas, whose Grand Prix horses were famous throughout the world, but where

the stables were filthy with pollution not just from droppings but also from tobacco. "No problem," said Hercules, and people nodded wisely and said, yes, there was no problem, and that was the fifth new labour. Then Hercules came to the singing birds of Stymphalia, some of which sang opera in foreign languages and some in their own language, and they made a frightful noise day and night, and ate up money by the million, and Hercules forced them to go and live in one opera house and clear up their own act, and that was the sixth new labour.

The he came to the Cretan Bull, which he had culled, saying it was mad because of the previous government, and then

he came to lots of other problems such as the Millennium Dome, which Atlas usually carried on his shoulders and which Hercules bore for a second just for a photo-opportunity, and then he pledged himself to introduce the Single Girdle of Hippolyte, and he cleared up lots of other problems, or at least it was announced by his faithful servant Mandelae that he had.

And finally he went back to the Oracle, and said: "I have done all these 12 tasks. Are my ratings now back to the previous high level which I enjoyed for so long?"

And the Oracle said, "No, they are not."

But Hercules ignored this and behaved as if they were.

Iverson ousted in sudden shake-up at Laura Ashley

Ann Iverson was dramatically ousted yesterday as chief executive of Laura Ashley, the troubled fashion retailer, after her two-year attempt to improve the ailing group's fortunes ended in failure. She will depart with a £450,000 pay-off and is tipped to return to her native America. Nigel Cope, City Correspondent, reports on the end of a colourful high street saga.

The decision to replace Ms Iverson, 54, was taken by the board after several weeks of discussions and she was informed by the chairman, John Thornton, on Monday evening. The company said its decision had not been prompted by pressure from institutional shareholders but by the apparent failure of Ms Iverson's strategy to turn the group around. The company denied that Sir Bernard Ashley, Laura Ashley's widow, had instigated Ms Iverson's removal though it is understood he did support it. Ms Iverson will depart with immediate effect with a pay-off of one year's salary equivalent to £450,000. Jim Walsh, one of her closest allies whom she brought in as finance director, is also set to leave though he will remain until a successor can be found. Stephen Cox, the group's company secretary, said: "If you look at this year's numbers it was not a surprise. Obviously it is disappointing not just for her but for the rest of the business. We probably ran too far too fast and the plan now will be to restore stability."

David Hoare, who was brought in as chief operating officer two months ago, will become the group's fourth chief executive in less than four years. He is set to review the group's operations in North America, which have been performing poorly. The number of product lines will also be reviewed after City criticism that the attempted to sell ladieswear, childrenswear and home furnishings from small stores is proving unsuccessful. The company is also in talks with

bankers about the terms of a £50m loan. A company spokesman claimed that the banks were being supportive.

Ms Iverson will return her 5.5 million share options. Mr Walsh will return his 1.1 million options and will also receive a £300,000 pay-off. After the controversy of Ms Iverson's remuneration, Mr Hoare is being paid a more modest £200,000 a year with no bonus. His share option package has yet to be decided.

Retailing analysts said the timing of Ms Iverson's departure was a surprise. Nick Bubb of Société Générale Strauss Turnbull said: "Either there has been a falling out or there is more bad news about trading on the way." He added: "The task [to turn around Laura Ashley] was almost superhuman. It now faces a long period of consolidation and cost-cutting. But it is a business with some kind of future."

Ms Iverson's departure marks the end of a two-year tenure at Laura Ashley which has been characterised by aggressive predictions which have seldom been realised. When she was recruited in June 1995, she arrived with a golden reputation as a retail wonderwoman. After making her name as a high flyer at Bonwit Teller and Bloomingdale's in the United States, she was enticed to Britain by David Dworkin, then head of Storehouse, the BHS and Mothercare retailer. She cemented her reputation here by turning around the fortunes of Mothercare before returning to America.

When Sir Bernard Ashley announced her as the new chief executive of Laura Ashley, she was hailed as the potential saviour of the once proud retailer which had fallen on troubled times.

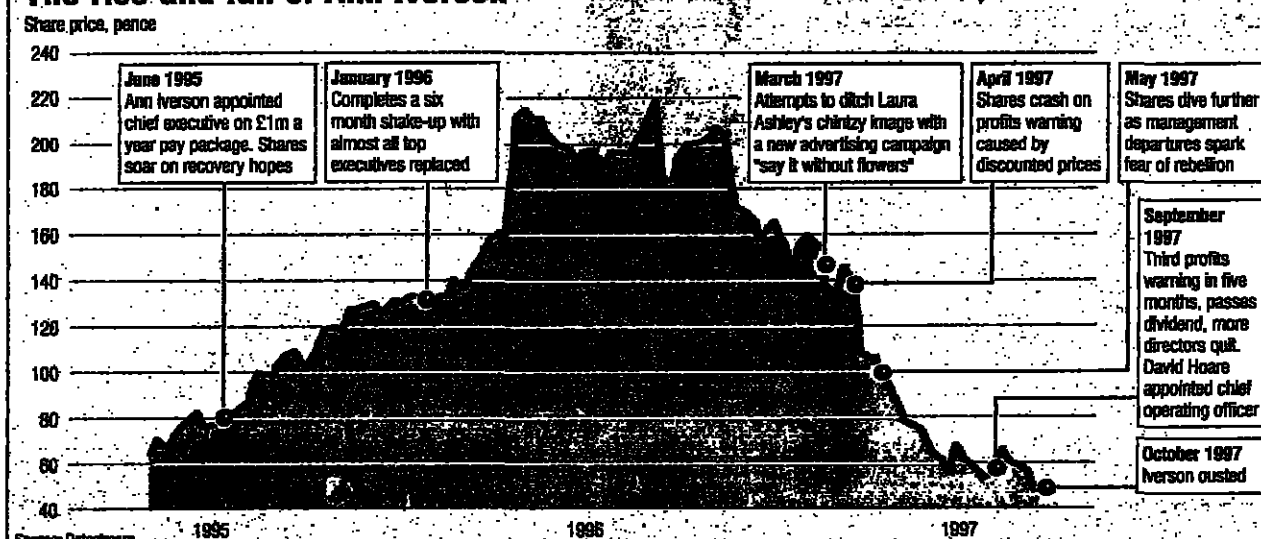
But her appointment caused problems from the start. Her pay package, which could have netted her £3.4m over three years, ruffled feathers in the City. And her aggressive management style soon caused disquiet in the boardroom. She recruited an almost entirely new team which included John Thornton, one of the most senior figures at Goldman Sachs, as chairman. She also filled the board with several Americans and several women. But her hands-on style which many said was too interfering, caused a string of executives to quit.

Outlook, page 25



Ann Iverson departs with immediate effect, with a pay-off of one year's salary equivalent to £450,000

The rise and fall of Ann Iverson



MacLaurin set to chair Vodafone

Lord MacLaurin, the former chairman of Tesco and now head of the England and Wales Cricket Board, is set to become the next chairman of the Vodafone cellular telephone operator.

He is expected to take over the post from Sir Ernest Harrison next year as part of a boardroom shake-up that will also see two new non-executive directors drafted in. Sir David Scholey, the former head of the investment bank SG Warburg, and Professor Alec Broers, vice-chancellor of Cambridge University, are to take over from Sir William Varlow and Sir Robert Clark.

Lord MacLaurin was appointed to the board as a non-executive earlier this year. News of his elevation to the chairmanship came as Vodafone drove home its market leadership in the mobile telephone business by unveiling better than expected interim results and a new set of price reductions and predicting a record Christmas.

Vodafone claimed the price reductions would undercut Orange's tariffs by between 5 and 10 per cent, but Orange disputed this. The new price cuts will benefit 2.1 million Vodafone customers and will see peak-rate call charges cut by 12.5 per cent and off-peak rates fall by more than 15 per cent. Some charges will fall by up to 16.5 per cent.

Pre-tax profits for the six months to the end of September came in at £297.5m - an 18 per cent improvement on last year and higher than the analysts' range of forecasts. Chris Gent, Vodafone's chief executive, said it had benefited from a particularly strong UK performance which resulted in underlying profit growth rising by £42.5m.

The improvement in profits came despite a £10m currency hit because of the strength of sterling and £19m of restructuring charges. One of the main factors was a sharp drop in bonus payments to service providers which have shrunk from £150 to £86 per customer.

Mr Gent forecast a net growth in customers of around 120,000 in the current quarter adding: "It looks like being a very strong Christmas, probably our strongest ever."

Two-thirds of its 3 million subscribers have converted from analogue to digital service and usage rates are up from 113 to 133 minutes a month. Despite the clamp-down on the use of mobile phones in trains and the criticism of their use in cars, Mr Gent said usage levels were benefiting from the growth in the "walking and talking" market.

Beckett delivers setback to Sears recovery by blocking Freemans sale

The hopes of Sears, the struggling retailer, for an upturn in fortunes were dealt a further blow yesterday when its plan to sell its Freemans mail order business to Littlewoods for £367.5m was blocked by the Government. Margaret Beckett, President of the board of trade said the merger of Littlewoods and Freemans "may be expected to operate against the public interest."

Nigel Cope, City Correspondent reports.



Sir Bob Reid: Seeking a judicial review but plans to improve Freemans' performance

Publishing the MMC report Margaret Beckett said she accepted the report's findings that the link-up of the two companies would have given Littlewoods a dominant position in the agency mail order business. As City analysts had expected she concentrated on the possible impact on lower income groups which use agency mail order as a use of cheap credit which they may be denied from other sources such as credit cards and store cards.

She said: "This merger would have a direct impact on a substantial number of individual consumers, over 20 million people in the UK use agency mail order. Lower income groups make up around two-thirds of all agents and these groups account for around 70 per cent of all agency mail order sales."

Ms Beckett said the agency market was highly concentrated and static. Together with the market leader Great Universal Stores, a merged Littlewoods and Freemans would have accounted for 80 per cent of agency mail order sales between them.

She supported the MMC's view that the deal could have reduced competition and led to a detrimental effect on choices, prices or the efficiency of the market. "Some benefits might be expected from the merger if it were allowed to proceed but the MMC's conclusion is that the benefits do not outweigh the adverse effects identified in the report," Mrs Beckett concluded.

The decision is a big setback for Sears' as it had hoped to use the proceeds of the Freemans sale to fund a £400m-plus pay-out to the group's long-suffering shareholders. It will now seek to demerge Freemans within the next two years and will review options on the special dividend or share buy back at the time of the Selfridges de-merger. It is now likely that only the £77m gained from the sale of the St Enoch's shopping centre in Scotland will be returned to shareholders.

Commenting on the blocking of the Freemans

deal, Sir Bob Reid, Sears chairman, said he regretted the decision and would seek a judicial review. However, analysts said the chances of success via this route were "virtually nil".

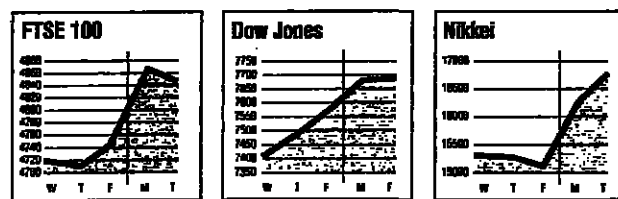
Sir Bob said Sears would not seek to sell Freemans to any other bidders but concentrate on improving its performance. Yesterday it reported a better than expected trading performance with second half sales up by 8 per cent to date.

The blow knocked 3.5p off Sears share price which fell to a 15-year low of 54.5p. Analysts said that even though the market had been anticipating the Government's decision "the news was still depressing when confirmed".

Nick Bubb of Société Générale Strauss Turnbull said that when Selfridges was demerged next June it could be worth 30p per share valuing it at around £460m. This leaves other parts of the business such as British Shoe Corporation valued at almost nothing in the current share price.

Sears says plans to sell the footwear businesses are progressing well and that interest has been expressed in all of the brands. Potential buyers are now undertaking their due diligence procedures. There have been fears that the company may be forced to close larger numbers of stores if buyers cannot be found. David James, the company director, has been working on finding buyers since the spring together with JP Morgan, the investment bank.

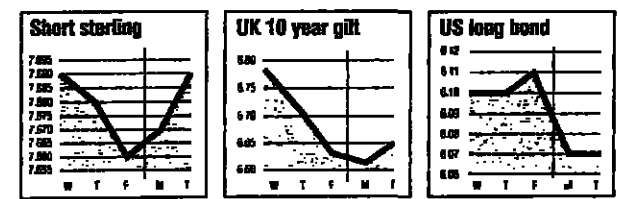
STOCK MARKETS



Indices

Index	Close	Change	Change(%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield(%)
FTSE 100	4845.40	-21.60	-0.44	5367.30	3682.70	3.60
FTSE 250	4623.40	-2.40	-0.05	4963.80	4321.80	3.50
FTSE 350	2340.70	-8.70	-0.37	2570.50	1835.70	3.58
FTSE All Share	2290.99	-8.44	-0.37	2507.98	1942.22	3.56
FTSE SmallCap	2280.0	-8.10	-0.35	2407.40	2127.50	3.58
FTSE Fledgling	1251.1	-4.10	-0.33	1345.50	1156.70	3.42
FTSE AIM	983.0	-1.10	-0.11	1138.00	985.90	1.08
Dow Jones	7691.34	-5.41	-0.07	8299.03	6236.05	1.75
Nikkei	16726.57	443.25	2.72	21460.57	14966.13	0.92
Hang Seng	10245.18	-174.57	-1.69	16820.31	8775.88	3.91
Dax	3833.47	38.86	1.02	4459.89	2756.11	2.08

INTEREST RATES



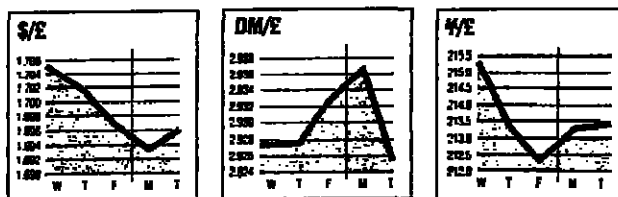
Money Market Rates

	3 month	1 yr	1 yr cdy	10 yr	10 yr cdy	Long bond	1 yr cdy
UK	7.68	1.24	7.94	0.94	6.65	-0.85	6.58
US	6.88	0.39	6.00	0.31	5.85	-0.35	6.07
Japan	0.44	-0.06	0.53	-0.12	1.82	-0.74	2.53
Germany	3.75	0.57	4.10	0.81	5.57	-0.23	6.19

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Falls
Williams 390.00 37.00 10.48	Enterprise 609.00 -43.00 -6.60
Royal Electronic 224.00 9.50 4.43	Sears 54.50 -3.50 -6.03
Great Port 255.00 100.00 4.08	Vodafone 341.5 -15.5 -4.34
Lorho 91.50 3.50 3.98	Orange 242 -6 -3.59

CURRENCIES



Pound

	at 5pm	Change	1 yr ago	Dollar	at 5pm	Change	1 yr ago
Dollar	1.6950	+0.28c	1.6759	Sterling	0.5986	-0.10p	0.5987
D-Mark	2.9265	-0.08pf	2.5225	D-Mark	1.7282	-0.81pf	1.5029
Yen	213.48	+0.84	186.22	Yen	125.88	+0.29	111.43
£ index	104.10	+0.00	92.00	£ index	105.90	-0.20	98.10

OTHER INDICATORS

	at 5pm	Change	1 yr ago		at 5pm	Change	1 yr ago
Brent Oil (\$)	19.30	0.04	22.25	GDP	114.00	3.90	109.7
Gold (\$)	308.45	2.60	379.10	RPI	159.50	3.7	153.91
Silver (\$)	5.11	-0.03	4.91	Base Rates	7.25	6.00	

www.bloomberg.com

source: Bloomberg

Energis executives will net £1m in flotation bonuses

A group of senior executives at Energis will net flotation bonuses worth more than £1m when the telecoms operator comes to the stock market next month in an offering valuing the company at up to £962m. Michael Harrison reports.

Gordon Owen, the chairman of Energis and the driving force behind its creation using the National Grid's distribution system, will receive a bonus of up to £895,000, of which about £600,000 will be reinvested in buying 200,000 shares in the business.

A further 15-20 executives most closely involved with the development of the business, led by finance director Chris Hibbert, will share in discretionary flotation bonuses of £250,000.

Mike Grabiner, chief executive, will not receive a flotation bonus but he has been granted more than 800,000 share options which are showing a maximum paper profit of £1.7m. According to the pathfinder prospectus published yesterday, his salary will be £270,000 and he will be eligible for an annual bonus of up to 50 per cent of basic pay.

Mr Owen is a lifelong telecoms executive. He was finance director of Cable & Wireless when it was privatised by the previous government in 1981. He subsequently became chief executive and launched its Mercury subsidiary in competition with BT.

The shares will be priced at between 250p and 325p, giving Energis a total market value of between £815m and £962m. A total of 75 million shares will be issued and priced through

a book building exercise. Although the issue is not being marketed at private shareholders, it is thought that between 5 and 7 per cent of the issue could end up with retail investors.

The National Grid, which owns 100 per cent of Energis, is selling off 26 per cent of the total share capital, meaning that the issue will raise net proceeds of £175m to £230m depending on the final share price. There is an over-allotment option which will entitle the Grid to issue a further 11.25 million bringing the proportion of the equity on offer to just under 30 per cent.

All of the proceeds will be used to repay a £205m debt to the parent company and the Grid has undertaken not to sell off any more of its shares for six months after the float.

Because of the complicated way the float has been structured, the Grid will own just under 50 per cent of the ordinary voting shares but will effectively control nearly three-quarters of the company through non-voting convertible preference shares.

Advisers said this shareholder structure would give Energis operational independence from the Grid without removing its bid premium.

The company, which concentrates exclusively on the business telephone market and high value-added services, made a profit of £2.1m before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation on sales of £69m in the first half of this year.

Energis is forecast to be making profits on a pre-tax basis in 2000-2001 and paying a dividend the year after. It has 16,000 customers spread across 35,000 sites but its two biggest customers by far are the BBC and the Grid itself, accounting for some £40m of annualised sales.

BIB man quits after chief executive is hired

Peter Van Gelder, managing director of British Interactive Broadcasting, the joint venture between BSkyB, BT, Midland Bank and Matsushita Electric, has quit after a chief executive was appointed over his head.

Mr Van Gelder spent less than six months in the post, but decided to leave over the weekend, following Friday's appointment of David Hilton in the new post of chief executive.

Mr Hilton was occupying Mr Van Gelder's office yesterday, and calls to Mr Van Gelder were directed to a mobile telephone number which he did not answer. Mr Van Gelder, 43, was formerly managing director of Teletext before joining BIB in June.

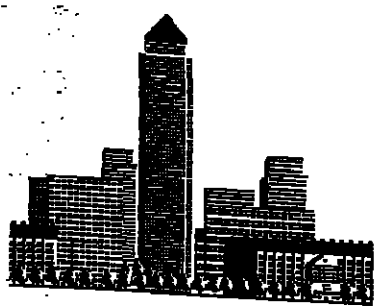
A spokesman for BIB said: "Mr Van

Gelder has decided he isn't going to stay on as managing director. He will continue to work with BIB to effect a smooth handover, but he has decided on reflection he'd be better off pursuing interests elsewhere." The spokesman would not comment on Mr Van Gelder's compensation package, nor on his current salary.

BIB, which is to provide interactive services for digital television, is to make further senior appointments shortly in an attempt to boost its management team. Sources close to the company said the boardroom shake-up came at a sensitive time. The European Commission recently sent BIB a list of concerns focusing on the link-up of dominant players such as BT and BSkyB.

-Cathy Newman

Laurin
to chair
afone



OUTLOOK ON LAURA ASHLEY'S TROUBLES. THE STOCK EXCHANGE'S TRADING PROBLEMS AND THE IRON CHANCELLOR

Iverson made things worse at Laura Ashley

When she was appointed as chief executive of Laura Ashley, Anne Iverson must have known she was taking on one of the toughest jobs in British retailing. Unfortunately she seems to have made her task tougher still by adopting an over-optimistic view about what could be achieved. Yesterday she duly paid the price.

Laura Ashley has been all at sea ever since its synonymous founder and inspiration died more than ten years ago. This is often the case with entrepreneurial companies after the visionary who created them passes away. In many respects, it is a miracle that Laura Ashley is still here at all, given the experimental management the company was subjected to and the degree to which it strayed from the principles, designs and culture that made it into a household name.

The situation was bad enough when the flame haired Mr Iverson arrived. Far from correcting the company's difficulties, her go getting, hands on, whirlwind approach to management seems to have made them worse. Her whole modus operandi tended towards the over-optimistic and the expansionary, but this proved to be the last thing that Laura Ashley needed.

Ms Iverson's biggest mistake was the big drive for expansion in the US, which she rightly saw as a natural for the Laura Ashley brand. Operationally, however, the company was never up to it, and the push has resulted in big losses. There was also a more fundamental difficulty. On the garments side of the business, she and others took the product in the wrong direction. What-

ever that product now is, one thing is certain - it is not Laura Ashley. The new man in the job, David Hoare, a former Bainie, is likely to be much more suited to the calm, step by step, back to its origins approach this company really needs. The goals will be more modest, but the result should be a good deal more satisfactory.

Ms Iverson departs from the wreckage with a year's pay and plenty of time to pursue her friendship with Sir Geoffrey Mulcahy of Woolworths, with whom she has been romantically linked. This is perhaps more than she deserved.

Order-driven anomalies

The Stock Exchange is sticking to the script on the alleged shortcomings of its new order-driven trading system, but worries are plainly mounting that Sets is not the unqualified success we have been led to believe. Yesterday's move to allow execution only brokers to warn their clients to trade later in the day when they might get a better price is an embarrassing admission that the new system is potentially flawed.

In the run up to its launch four weeks ago, it was claimed that Sets would be the investor's friend, making it cheaper for everyone to buy and sell shares by slashing the difference between the bid and offer prices that used to represent the market maker's cut. It hasn't worked out that way. Far from becoming extinct, jobbers are for

the time being making hay. They are still conducting two thirds of all business and making a better turn on it to boot.

According to the Exchange, the average spread has fallen below the old system's benchmark of just over 0.6 per cent. For most of the day it hovers around 0.5 per cent, but that disguises periods at both ends of the trading day when the spread is much higher. At the opening, it can be four times as much and does not tend to fall until about 10 o'clock when the market has enough depth to make it a sensible reflection of buying and selling intentions.

What that means in practice is that some pretty silly prices get quoted, and because the computer just does what it's told, some pretty silly deals get done. This is fine if you are close to the market and able to get a feel for what is the right price by watching other deals go through the system. It is not much good to Auntie Flo telling her no-frills broker to sell her building society shares "at best price".

Every day a glaring anomaly is thrown up. For instance, a string of trades in Williams yesterday at 351p was followed by one insignificant deal of 1,000 shares at 390p. Moreover, because it was the last order book transaction of the day in the stock, the higher price was booked as the closing price and is what appears in today's newspapers. This despite bearing no relation to the vast bulk of yesterday's dealings.

The relationship between the Stock Exchange and its computers being what it is, Gavin Casey is taking great care not to seem

complacent, but he appears worryingly content to wait and see if higher volumes will solve the problem. They may do, but just in case the Exchange reverts to form, make sure you deal after lunch and set a limit.

Boom will not last for Brown

It should perhaps come as a surprise to learn that Gordon Brown has been tougher on public spending than Kenneth Clarke, but somehow it doesn't. Where Mr Clarke a year ago revised up his forecast for the current year's PSBR from £15bn to £19bn, his successor is likely to revise his down from £11bn to £9bn. The scale of the boom has exceeded all expectations, explaining part of the Brown improvement. But more important is the fact that central government departments are so far spending less this year than they were last. The new Chancellor does indeed seem to be made of iron.

It won't last. The economy will start to slow next year. In addition, the pressures for higher public spending so widely discussed during the election campaign have not vanished in the new dawn. Pay is one issue. The only reason economy-wide average earnings look so favourable despite falling unemployment is because of the public sector pay freeze. The time will come when nurses, teachers and council officials have to be awarded a decent rise. Nor will the Government be able to es-

cape spending more money on health and education. Yesterday's news of bigger and longer NHS waiting lists can only have reinforced the new Government's concern about this political and fiscal timebomb. For all Gordon Brown's determination to reallocate money within the total and make savings on efficiency, the Government cannot hope to meet the public's expectations through this route alone.

The Chancellor will undoubtedly want to stick to his own golden rule on the government budget, with borrowing limited to the amount of public sector investment over the course of a business cycle. Mr Brown is so determined to be fiscally prudent that he plans to legislate for borrowing rules.

So how is he going to accommodate these growing pressures on spending? One obvious solution would be to fudge it - to redefine public investment to include some health and education spending after the results of the "Comprehensive Spending Review" are announced next summer. This would give extra leeway on borrowing. The trouble with this approach is that the City would see it for what it would be, a tricky sleight of hand.

The more likely solution, then, would be for the Chancellor to resort to a mix of asset sales and high taxes. There's nothing left of the family silver now, but there is still the odd pewter mug lying on the back shelf that might hold a car boot sale price. Rather more promising is the scope for raising taxes. Inevitably this is where the real squeeze is going to come.

Japan stocks bounce back as government relief plan unveiled

The startling rally in the Japanese stock market showed no sign of abating yesterday, despite a lukewarm reaction to a new government package designed to stimulate the stalling economy. Richard Lloyd Parry reports from Tokyo.

The Nikkei stock average of 225 leading shares closed at 16,726.57, up 443 points or 2.7 per cent. Since the beginning of the week, stocks have risen by more than 10 per cent, despite the collapse on Monday of Hokkaido Tokushoku, Japan's tenth biggest bank.

Investors took heart from hints by ministers that, despite their new willingness to let big banks go under, depositors would be protected by the government - a position which appeared to be echoed yesterday by Ryutaro Hashimoto, the Prime Minister.

"As I've said, we want to hold a meeting with this in mind," he replied, in answer to a question about whether public funds would be made available.

Officials of the Ministry of Finance admitted after the collapse of Hokkaido Tokushoku that they expected "one or two more banks to go under". Ominously, the Ministry of Finance yesterday began an "inspection" of Hokkaido Bank, a regional bank based, like Hokkaido Tokushoku, on Japan's northernmost island. Hokkaido has

owned up to about 200bn yen (£940m) in bad loans, generally judged to be an underestimate.

But in the financial world, there is presently little doubt that the government will step in to rescue depositors at stricken banks - if not the institutions themselves. Among the public, however, the use of tax money to save banks which have gone under due to their own bad lending decision is unpopular. In any case, the government has committed itself to cutting public spending in an effort to cut its own debt of more than ¥500 trillion.

The government's difficulties were underlined yesterday by the announcement of a new policy package of deregulation measures intended to boost the private sector and stimulate stagnant growth. It contained more than 100 individual measures, ranging from the privatisation of KDD, the country's biggest international phone carrier, to government loans for small business, and a change in stock market rules to allow banks and insurance companies to compete with brokerages.

According to the Economic Planning Agency (EPA), the overall effect of the package on the economy will be 60 trillion yen. Previous injections of government cash, some 60 trillion yen worth between 1992 and 1995, have "resulted in the worst and most critical fiscal conditions among the major economies in the world," said the economic planning minister, Koji Omi. "I am fully convinced that this economic policy package will soon push our economy back on

a robust growth path led by more vigorous and dynamic economic activities in the private sector."

But some of the measures outlined will not take effect until 1999, and the concession on which business had been pinning its hopes of short-term relief - tax cuts - was absent from the package, although a review of corporate tax cuts is promised for December. "The question is whether it can serve as a quick fix for the flagging Japanese economy," said Kosaku Inaba, chairman of the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry. "I hope the government will formulate an additional package that includes tax cuts," said Shoji Tsuda, president of the Mitsubishi department store chain, badly hit by the rise last April in the consumption tax.

Elsewhere in Far East markets, the escalating problems in South Korea dominated the day's events. The key KOSPI stock market index plunged as much as 4 per cent after South Korea's parliament rejected financial reform bills, heightening speculation that the government would seek tens of billions of dollars from the International Monetary Fund. The KOSPI index still finished 2.32 per cent down on the day.

In Hong Kong, a three-day rally in share prices was halted as the Hang Seng index fell 174.57 points to 10,245.18. There was further concern about possible interest rate increases. "Hong Kong interbank rates are up slightly, and that's enough to make people nervous," said James Osborn of ING-Barings Securities (HK).



Japanese shares surged overnight on reports, later denied, that Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto (above) said public funds would be used to bail out the shaky banking sector

Brown is able to slash borrowing

The Government's finances are in better shape than anybody expected. The reason is Gordon Brown's success at beating even the tough Tory spending targets, as Diane Coyle, Economics Editor, reports.

The Government repaid £5.7bn of its debt in October, taking its borrowing for the financial year so far to just £2.6bn compared with £11.2bn at the same stage last year.

The one-off sale of Ministry of Defence housing makes the comparison unfair. Even so, City analysts were unanimous yesterday in predicting that the Chancellor of the Exchequer would be able to announce a target for the public sector borrowing requirement this year of some £2bn below the target he set in July.

The strong economy has helped deliver the improvement in borrowing, boosting the tax take and helping reduce expenditure on social security payments.

Yesterday's figures showing a surplus of government revenue over expenditure in October benefited from £10.8bn in corporation tax receipts, a £1.7bn increase on the same month last year. There will be another tax bonus from

windfall tax revenues of £2.6bn due in December.

The picture for total tax revenues is more mixed, however. Income taxes were up strongly year-on-year but customs and excise receipts such as VAT were, surprisingly, lower than a year ago.

The main reason for the better-than-expected borrowing figures published yesterday is the Government's ultra-tough control of spending. Departmental expenditure in the first seven months of this financial year is 0.7 per cent lower than last year, much less than the annual growth rate of 1.7 per cent pencilled in by the Treasury.

Spending is likely to increase over the course of the next few months. Departments traditionally catch up in the final month or two of the financial year if they face the risk of an underspend being carried over into the subsequent year's allocation.

Many economists also expect the pressure for higher spending on health and education to derail the Iron Chancellor's targets in the end.

David Hillier, UK economist at Barclays Capital, said: "We all expected slippage in the spending plans after the elections and you have to give them credit for avoiding that. But I don't think a Labour Government will carry on delivering negative spending growth."

Sabena buys Airbus jets in \$1.5bn agreement

Airbus Industrie yesterday beat Boeing to a \$1.5bn (£990m) order from the Belgian flag-carrier Sabena in a move which will see the European aircraft consortium becoming its sole supplier.

Sabena is to buy 34 narrow-bodied Airbus jets to replace its ageing fleet of Boeing 737s which are being phased out because of tougher noise limits.

In a closely fought contest, Boeing had offered to help fund Sabena's technical maintenance operations through a joint venture company.

However, Sabena's close links with Swissair, which is a big operator of Airbus aircraft, may have swung the deal in favour of the European consortium. As part of its bid, Airbus also offered Sabena a training package supported by Swissair.

Meanwhile, Airbus was poised to pick up further launch orders for its stretched A340-500 and 600 jets from Lufthansa and Swissair. The industrial launch of the new jet, expected to cost about \$2bn to develop, has been held up because of uncertainties about UK funding for the project.

The Government has indicated that it will not provide British Aerospace with £120m in launch aid to build the wings for the A340-500 and 600.

BAC, which has a 20 per cent stake in Airbus, is facing total development costs of £360m and has warned that it may take the Airbus work abroad if the Government refuses to provide launch investment putting thousands of jobs at risk. Alternative locations for building the wings include Spain and Italy.

Stakeholder threat to pension laggards

Helen Liddell, Economic Secretary to the Treasury, said yesterday that failure by pension providers to clear up the mis-selling scandal would affect their ability to sell in two potentially vast new markets - stakeholder pensions and individual savings accounts. Andrew Verity reports.

In a statement to the House of Commons, Mrs Liddell said the records of investment firms in compensating investors for mis-selling will be taken into account when they apply to sell the new financial products to be launched by the Government. She said: "We anticipate that future decisions on the reg-

ulatory approval of stakeholder pensions would take into account the conduct and corporate governance of those involved. This would include, of course, their record in settling cases of mis-sold pensions."

"The Government believes that the time has come for a whole range of sanctions to come into play. The only way for a firm or an individual to avoid disciplinary action is to avoid the conduct which warrants it."

The Government also confirmed yesterday that directors could be removed from boardroom posts for failure to meet deadlines for clearing up the mis-selling scandal. More than 90 per cent of the top priority cases must be completed by the end of December.

Errant directors could also be barred from working within the financial services industry. The same will apply to the managers and sales staff of life

insurers and independent financial advisers.

"Far too many firms - from big insurance companies to small independent financial advisers - have been slow to act. Some firms have hardly started. They have not yet grasped the severity of the situation," Mrs Liddell said.

While the Government has hinted in the past that poor conduct of the review of mis-sold pensions would affect the ability to sell the new products, Mrs Liddell's statement is the first explicit warning.

Stakeholder pensions are at the heart of the Government's much-touted pension reforms, aimed at giving people on lower incomes better access to pension provision. They will be designed as collective investments and marketed through trade unions, professional bodies and other affinity groups.

Given that 8 million people

have no retirement provision except state pensions, the market is potentially huge. In order to compete with other pension products, the new pensions would have to enjoy tax breaks.

Mrs Liddell has also given her first formal warning that mistakes in the mis-selling review will affect decisions on which companies will sell individual savings accounts, the new tax-privileged vehicle set for launch in April 1999.

For companies likely to fail to complete the pension mis-selling review on time, the statement confirms that future earnings are in jeopardy. When individual savings accounts (ISAs) are introduced, they will be designed to accept tens of billions of pounds of money held in personal equity plans (PEPs). If the company cannot offer ISAs, any funds held in PEPs are likely to move away to other providers.

NOTICE TO BENTALLS CARDHOLDERS

THE MONTHLY RATE OF INTEREST APPLICABLE TO BENTALLS CARD ACCOUNTS OPERATED BY BENTALLS CARD SERVICES IS TO BE INCREASED TO 2.10% (EQUIVALENT TO AN APR OF 28.3 [VARIABLE]).

THE NEW RATE WILL BECOME EFFECTIVE ON 1 DECEMBER 1997 AND WILL APPLY TO ALL INTEREST BEARING BALANCES OUTSTANDING ON AND TO ALL TRANSACTIONS DEBITED FROM THAT DATE.

THE FINANCIAL DETAILS IN CARDHOLDERS' CREDIT AGREEMENTS ARE VARIED TO REFLECT THESE CHANGES IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THOSE AGREEMENTS.

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Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Starting Spot			Doubt			Spot		
	1 month	3 month	3 month	1 month	3 month	3 month	1 month	3 month	3 month
UK	10000	24539	2458	14500	15305	14316	05262	05262	05262
Australia	24539	20549	20477	1234	1235	1234	05262	05262	05262
Belgium	20549	18101	58776	15876	15876	15876	05262	05262	05262
Canada	23627	23628	23628	15876	15876	15876	05262	05262	05262
France	17105	17106	17106	15876	15876	15876	05262	05262	05262
EU	17105	17177	16756	15876	15876	15876	05262	05262	05262
Finland	87818	87788	87788	15876	15876	15876	05262	05262	05262
Germany	23627	23628	23628	15876	15876	15876	05262	05262	05262
Greece	45335	45361	45361	15876	15876	15876	05262	05262	05262
Hong Kong	12126	12127	11779	15876	15876	15876	05262	05262	05262
Italy	23627	23628	23628	15876	15876	15876	05262	05262	05262
Japan	23627	23628	23628	15876	15876	15876	05262	05262	05262
Mexico	14009	32665	32746	15876	15876	15876	05262	05262	05262
Netherlands	23627	23628	23628	15876	15876	15876	05262	05262	05262
Norway	15904	15885	17795	15876	15876	15876	05262	05262	05262
Portugal	23627	23628	23628	15876	15876	15876	05262	05262	05262
Spain	23627	23628	23628	15876	15876	15876	05262	05262	05262
Switzerland	23627	23628	23628	15876	15876	15876	05262	05262	05262
Sweden	23627	23628	23628	15876	15876	15876	05262	05262	05262
Switzerland	23627	23628	23628	15876	15876	15876	05262	05262	05262
US	15890			15876	15876	15876	05262	05262	05262

Other Spot Rates

Country	Sterling	Dollar
Canada	1.00	1.00
France	1.00	1.00
Germany	1.00	1.00
Italy	1.00	1.00
Japan	1.00	1.00
Spain	1.00	1.00
Sweden	1.00	1.00
Switzerland	1.00	1.00
U.S.	1.00	1.00

Country	Share (%)	Rank	Country	Share (%)	Rank
Argentina	10830	1	Oran	16525	13850
Chile	10789	2	Puerto	74578	44000
China	14035	82807	Philippines	56272	34570
Czech Rep	55521	32493	Poland	53415	83935
Egypt	73794	33652	Qatar	67705	36405
France	73794	33652	Qatar	100272	59170
Hungary	33835	39157	South Korea	17916	102180
India	82567	37250	Taiwan	53848	36250
Indonesia	79500	34750	Thailand	68527	36250
Japan	93144	31035	Turkey	520716	169800
Nigeria	34449	79350	UAE	12247	36725

Interest Rates			
UK		Germany	
3 months	5.50%	3 months	6.50%
6 months	5.75%	6 months	6.75%
12 months	6.00%	12 months	7.00%

Base	7.25%	Libor	2.50%	Time	5.00%	Belgium	
France		Lombard	4.50%	Discount		Discount	2.75%
Intervention	3.90%	Canada		Fed Funds	5.50%	Switzerland	3.30%
Discount		Prime	5.25%	Spain		Central bank	
Discount	6.25%	Repo	3.75%	10-d Repo	5.00%	Switzerland	
Netherlands		Denmark		Sweden		Discount	1.00%
SPAdvised	3.30%	Discount	3.50%	Repo (Ave)	4.0%	Lombard	3.00%

Country	3 mth chg	1 yr chg	2
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Australia	0.00	4.76	0.00	5.55	0.00	0.00	5.53	0.00	5.44	5.72	0.00
Belgium	3.73	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.44	5.72
Canada	3.50	-0.03	-0.21	-0.02	-0.41	-0.04	-0.04	0.00	-0.01	5.46	0.00
EURO	4.82	-0.01	4.78	0.01	4.89	0.01	5.21	0.01	5.28	0.01	5.78
France	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.46	0.00
Germany	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.46	0.00
Italy	0.00	-0.08	0.56	0.04	0.51	-0.01	5.63	0.02	5.63	0.03	-0.02
Japan	5.85	0.07	0.28	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.46	0.00
South Korea	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.46	0.00
Spain	4.80	0.00	4.66	0.04	4.70	0.01	5.21	0.01	5.28	0.01	5.78
Sweden	4.93	-0.01	4.96	0.01	5.03	0.01	5.35	0.01	5.42	0.01	5.78
UK	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.46	0.00
US	7.05	0.00	7.04	0.00	7.14	0.02	8.34	0.22	8.34	0.22	8.86
WORLD	5.35	0.00	5.38	0.00	5.69	0.01	5.78	0.01	5.84	0.01	6.04

Money Market Rates

	Overnight	1 week	1 month	3 months	6 months	1 year
Treasury Bills			7.20	7.05	7.20	7.05
USCR						
Dollar Deposits	7.25	7.31	7.25	7.31	7.38	7.44
European Deposits	7.24	7.36	7.21	7.41	7.67	7.78
Eighteen Month Bills			7.21	7.25	7.32	7.43
Sterling CDs			7.41	7.34	7.83	7.75
Eurodollar CDs			8.58	8.65	8.85	
ECU Deposits			4.31	4.44	4.47	4.59

Liffe Financial Futures

Contract	Settlement	High	Low	Volume	Interest
Long GR	Dec-87	1789	1825	1753	16655
Long DRI	Dec-87	132.4	132.4	12.4	29487
US Long Bond	Dec-87	119.1	119.1	119.1	757
Italian Bond	Dec-87	124.0	124.5	124.2	5471
Japan Govt Bd	Dec-87	124.4	124.5	124.5	2893
3 Mtn Starting	Mar-88	92.34	92.34	92.31	7240
	Mar-88	92.22	92.23	92.23	14104
3 Mtn Euronia	Dec-87	90.6	90.19	90.19	18057
	Mar-88	90.4	90.5	90.52	30743
3 Mtn Eumira	Dec-87	93.79	93.63	93.79	10596
	Mar-88	94.5	94.52	94.58	12549
3 Mtn Eurayen	Dec-87	95.50			
	Mar-88	95.4	95.71	95.73	11574
3 Mtn Escuro	Mar-88	95.34	95.80	95.73	10470
3 Mtn ECU	Dec-87	97.31	97.30	97.33	50074
	Mar-88	97.3	97.35	97.3	8863
	Mar-88	97.3	97.35	97.3	15918
FTSE 100	Dec-87	457.00	485.00	485.00	6381

Settlement Price: 484540

Series	new				old				new				old			
	Call	Imp	Vol	Pct	Imp	Vol	Pct	Call	Imp	Vol	Pct	Call	Imp	Vol	Pct	
4750	116	15	20	65				259	136	318	165	383	227			
4800	79	12	33	57				229	166	288	205	353	246			
4850	46	11	54	80				199	176	256	227	321	267			
4900	27	15	82	92				167	200	226	247	291	287			

Commodity Indices

Index	1970=100	1980	-0.54	-0.27	215.26	-7.51
Agricultural	1970=100	24.26	.02	.05	231.23	4.35
Energy	1983=100	75.04	-0.50	-0.66	85.86	-12.60
Iron Metals	1977=100	170.05	.000	.000	168.79	0.78
Livestock	1970=100	132.25	-0.03	-0.02	191.03	-4.80
Prec Metals	1973=100	402.80	2.51	.063	463.54	-13.08

Energy

PE	Cross	Cng	Vol	PE	Cross	Cng	Vol	NTN	Last	Cng	Spot	Chf	NW	EUR
Nov	1978	1979	10068	Nov	17910	17900	9801	Dec	2018	-0.07	Gasoline	85		19750
Dec	1978	1978	1240	Dec	17900	-0.50	9584	Jan	2043	-0.04	Naphtha			19600
Feb	1953	0.02	5398	Jan	17900	-0.75	5293	Feb	2050	-0.02	Gasol			19250
								Mar	2047	-0.01	Fuel Oil (3.5%)			19500

Industrial Metals

Aluminum HG	1604.5	1602.5	-31.50	1638	1637	-.26	703675	-250
Aluminum Alloy	1495	1475	-20.00	1475	1465	-10	44300	-180
Copper A	1678.6	1680.5	-65.50	1608	1607	-.05	542825	-675
Lead	548.5	550.5	-13.50	597	598	10	16925	450
Nickel	6030	6040	-105.00	6125	6160	-100	66450	-532
Tin	5590	5595	-60.00	5590	5555	-55	8270	-10
Zinc	1139.5	1139.5	-3.50	1183	1184	-.38	466300	2075

Precious Metals

pm fix/\$ per oz			pm fix/£ per oz			Coins (\$)				
	Day's	Year's		Day's	Year's		Day's	Year's		
	chg	chg		chg	chg		inside	chg		
Platinum	38880	2.00	300	Platinum	228.75	-0.20	-2.35	Krugfranks	30145	-78.90
Palladium	202800	1.00	9000	Palladium	122.85	-0.15	52.20	Sovs	70.82	
Silver	5.11	-0.03	0.20	Silver	3.02	-0.03	0.07	Nobles	378.05	
Gold	304.03	0.35	-75.00					Maple Leaf	315.51	-75.59

Agricultural

Cocoa		Coffee		Barley		Potatoes		Lge Potatoes	
LFPE	3/10ne	LFPE	3/10ne	LFPE	3/10ne	LFPE	3/10ne	LFPE	3/10ne
May/96	100/100	Nov/96	925/500	Nov/96	74/55	Nov/96	85/00	Nov/96	728/00
May/96	104/104	Jan/97	935/500	Jan/97	73/50	Jan/97	82/00	Feb/97	730/00
May/96	104/104	May/96	935/500	May/96	73/50	May/96	82/00	May/96	725/00
Vol	25/18	Vol	25/11	Vol	149	Vol	70	Vol	2265/30
White Sugar		Freight		Wheat		Comm		Soya Beans	
LFPE	3/10ne	LFPE	3/10cgr			CBOT Centa/Bar		CBOT 56a beans	
May/96	34/80	Oct/96	—	Nov/96	8/100	Nov/96	27/600	Nov/96	23/00
May/96	34/80	Jan/97	12/000	Jan/97	8/100	Jan/97	27/600	Jan/97	23/00
May/96	31/00	Mar/96	12/400	Mar/96	85/25	Mar/96	22/200	Mar/96	23/20
Vol	900	Vol	8	Vol	201	Vol	3383/10	Vol	233

100 Largest Insurance Funds	
Fund	Assets
1. Fidelity Divers. Int'l	\$1,000,000,000
2. Fidelity Divers. Europe	\$900,000,000
3. Fidelity Divers. Asia	\$800,000,000
4. Fidelity Divers. Japan	\$700,000,000
5. Fidelity Divers. Pacific	\$600,000,000
6. Fidelity Divers. Latin Am.	\$500,000,000
7. Fidelity Divers. Africa	\$400,000,000
8. Fidelity Divers. Middle East	\$300,000,000
9. Fidelity Divers. Europe	\$200,000,000
10. Fidelity Divers. Asia	\$150,000,000
11. Fidelity Divers. Japan	\$100,000,000
12. Fidelity Divers. Pacific	\$80,000,000
13. Fidelity Divers. Latin Am.	\$60,000,000
14. Fidelity Divers. Africa	\$40,000,000
15. Fidelity Divers. Middle East	\$20,000,000
16. Fidelity Divers. Europe	\$10,000,000
17. Fidelity Divers. Asia	\$5,000,000
18. Fidelity Divers. Japan	\$2,000,000
19. Fidelity Divers. Pacific	\$1,000,000
20. Fidelity Divers. Latin Am.	\$500,000
21. Fidelity Divers. Africa	\$250,000
22. Fidelity Divers. Middle East	\$100,000
23. Fidelity Divers. Europe	\$50,000
24. Fidelity Divers. Asia	\$25,000
25. Fidelity Divers. Japan	\$10,000
26. Fidelity Divers. Pacific	\$5,000
27. Fidelity Divers. Latin Am.	\$2,000
28. Fidelity Divers. Africa	\$1,000
29. Fidelity Divers. Middle East	\$500
30. Fidelity Divers. Europe	\$250
31. Fidelity Divers. Asia	\$100
32. Fidelity Divers. Japan	\$50
33. Fidelity Divers. Pacific	\$25
34. Fidelity Divers. Latin Am.	\$10
35. Fidelity Divers. Africa	\$5
36. Fidelity Divers. Middle East	\$2
37. Fidelity Divers. Europe	\$1
38. Fidelity Divers. Asia	\$0.50
39. Fidelity Divers. Japan	\$0.25
40. Fidelity Divers. Pacific	\$0.10
41. Fidelity Divers. Latin Am.	\$0.05
42. Fidelity Divers. Africa	\$0.02
43. Fidelity Divers. Middle East	\$0.01
44. Fidelity Divers. Europe	\$0.005
45. Fidelity Divers. Asia	\$0.002
46. Fidelity Divers. Japan	\$0.001
47. Fidelity Divers. Pacific	\$0.0005
48. Fidelity Divers. Latin Am.	\$0.0002
49. Fidelity Divers. Africa	\$0.0001
50. Fidelity Divers. Middle East	\$0.00005
51. Fidelity Divers. Europe	\$0.00002
52. Fidelity Divers. Asia	\$0.00001
53. Fidelity Divers. Japan	\$0.000005
54. Fidelity Divers. Pacific	\$0.000002
55. Fidelity Divers. Latin Am.	\$0.000001
56. Fidelity Divers. Africa	\$0.0000005
57. Fidelity Divers. Middle East	\$0.0000002
58. Fidelity Divers. Europe	\$0.0000001
59. Fidelity Divers. Asia	\$0.00000005
60. Fidelity Divers. Japan	\$0.00000002
61. Fidelity Divers. Pacific	\$0.00000001
62. Fidelity Divers. Latin Am.	\$0.000000005
63. Fidelity Divers. Africa	\$0.000000002
64. Fidelity Divers. Middle East	\$0.000000001
65. Fidelity Divers. Europe	\$0.0000000005
66. Fidelity Divers. Asia	\$0.0000000002
67. Fidelity Divers. Japan	\$0.0000000001
68. Fidelity Divers. Pacific	\$0.00000000005
69. Fidelity Divers. Latin Am.	\$0.00000000002
70. Fidelity Divers. Africa	\$0.00000000001
71. Fidelity Divers. Middle East	\$0.000000000005
72. Fidelity Divers. Europe	\$0.000000000002
73. Fidelity Divers. Asia	\$0.000000000001
74. Fidelity Divers. Japan	\$0.0000000000005
75. Fidelity Divers. Pacific	\$0.0000000000002
76. Fidelity Divers. Latin Am.	\$0.0000000000001
77. Fidelity Divers. Africa	\$0.00000000000005
78. Fidelity Divers. Middle East	\$0.00000000000002
79. Fidelity Divers. Europe	\$0.00000000000001
80. Fidelity Divers. Asia	\$0.000000000000005
81. Fidelity Divers. Japan	\$0.000000000000002
82. Fidelity Divers. Pacific	\$0.000000000000001
83. Fidelity Divers. Latin Am.	\$0.0000000000000005
84. Fidelity Divers. Africa	\$0.0000000000000002
85. Fidelity Divers. Middle East	\$0.0000000000000001
86. Fidelity Divers. Europe	\$0.00000000000000005
87. Fidelity Divers. Asia	\$0.00000000000000002
88. Fidelity Divers. Japan	\$0.00000000000000001
89. Fidelity Divers. Pacific	\$0.000000000000000005
90. Fidelity Divers. Latin Am.	\$0.000000000000000002
91. Fidelity Divers. Africa	\$0.000000000000000001
92. Fidelity Divers. Middle East	\$0.0000000000000000005
93. Fidelity Divers. Europe	\$0.0000000000000000002
94. Fidelity Divers. Asia	\$0.0000000000000000001
95. Fidelity Divers. Japan	\$0.00000000000000000005
96. Fidelity Divers. Pacific	\$0.00000000000000000002
97. Fidelity Divers. Latin Am.	\$0.00000000000000000001
98. Fidelity Divers. Africa	\$0.000000000000000000005
99. Fidelity Divers. Middle East	\$0.000000000000000000002
100. Fidelity Divers. Europe	\$0.000000000000000000001

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29/RACING

Stakeout at the bookies' corral

A long and bitter dispute between race tracks and bookmakers is close to a conclusion, and the outcome could affect punters everywhere.

You could call it racing's forgotten war - were it not for the fact that hardly anyone except its protagonists was even aware it had started.

The battleground is the betting ring and over the last six years the people who own Britain's racecourses and the bookmakers who offer odds in their enclosures have talked themselves to a bitter standstill over proposals to change the way the ring is organised. And no-one has noticed, and the racecourses in the bars and on the terraces, and certainly not the punters in the off-course shops where the vast majority of British bets are placed.

Which is a shame, because a peace treaty will be imposed on the warring parties within the next 12 months, and if the arbitrators get it wrong, the long-term consequences for ordinary punters could be disastrous. Punters' representatives are concerned that the major off-course bookmakers will finally achieve a long-cherished ambition, and effectively take control of the prices which

are transmitted from the ring to the country's betting shops by Satellite Information Services (SIS).

"It's the last piece in the jigsaw," Michael Singer, chairman of the National Association for the Protection of Punters, says. "They already have control of SIS, and they will be able to do as they please."

You do not need to be a shareholder in Ladbrokes to appreciate that major bookmakers doing as they please is hardly likely to work to the benefit of punters. The reasons for Singer's concern - which are echoed by many on-course bookmakers - are complex, but originate, as do most of racing's internal disputes, in the structural anomalies of a sport which started out as an aristocratic hobby and turned, by legal fits and starts, into a billion-pound industry.

For more than 30 years on-course bookmakers have administered the betting rings through their trade association, the National Association of Bookmakers. They determine how many bookmakers will operate at any given meeting and who they will be, via a system of seniority.

This means that if you want

to be an on-course bookie, you join a waiting list (often a very long one), before starting out in the poorest betting positions in the cheap enclosures and slowly working your way up (this, incidentally, explains why bookies in the best pitches, at the front near the Members' enclosure, rarely seem to be less than 60 years old).

No-one claims that the system is perfect, but from a punters' point of view at least, it does not work too badly. In all

successful, David Bowden, an experienced on-course bookmaker, says. "People know each other and they make the pricing system work."

The racecourses, however, argue that the ring does not cater adequately for their customers. Many bookies, for instance, refuse to offer cash-way betting, and among those who do, the precise terms are down to the individual. The tracks would also like to remove the ban which prevents rails bookmakers - on the prime sites adjoining the big hitters of the Members' enclosure - from displaying their prices on boards like the rest of the ring, something which the ordinary layers fear would remove much of their business at a stroke.

If so, this would also make it much easier for the major off-course chains, who are already represented on the rails, to manipulate the on-course market.

Another source of irritation is the increasing proliferation of smart, well-appointed betting shops on racecourses. "The main concern is to provide comfort and choice for our customers," Morag Gray, of the Racecourse Association, says.

"They want to be able to have small bets, and multiples, which they can't have in the ring, and as racecourse managers it would be shameful if we didn't want to provide that service."

What concerns the bookies, though, is that the track receives a commission on bets placed in the on-course shops, rather than a flat-fee rent for the site. This, they believe, gives the course a considerable incentive to persuade racegoers to bet at the shop rather than in the ring. Many of these new betting pavilions, what's more, are built with interest-free loans from the Levy Board. This could ultimately mean that money from off-course punters is being used to undermine the interests of the very people who have provided it.

"Of course, the racecourse owners are going to favour the bookmakers who give them the most income, and who can blame them?" John Morrill, a veteran of the ring, says. "But the crux is, do the public and Parliament want to see a betting monopoly operated by the conglomerates, because we are gradually seeing the demise of the on-course bookmakers and the ring is being fragmented."

It is the Levy Board which has now been given the task of resolving the war of the ring. Their decision - which is legally binding - could shape the future of British betting. The punters who fund the Board, but have no official representation on it, can only hope that they get it right.

BY GREG WOOD

the time that the NAB has administered pitches, not a single boards bookie has welcomed on his customers, and it is no coincidence that "John Batten", the infamous con-man who disappeared with thousands of pounds on Derby day, was standing on Epsom Hill, one of the only remaining betting sites that does not come under NAB control.

"It's an example of self-regulation that's been terrifically

until next season. "It would be a shame to risk everything this year. We have to be certain everything is right before he does run," Brookshaw said.

Lord Gyllene could miss his Aintree defence

Sunny Bay is the new Martell Grand National favourite at 16-1 (from 20-1) with Coral following yesterday's removal of Lord Gyllene from the betting.

Lord Gyllene, winner of last April's National, has a minor leg injury and his trainer Steve Brookshaw speculated yesterday that the horse could be out



Boards of race: Vying for business at Plumpton this week Photograph: David Ashdown

HAYDOCK

HYPERION
1.10 Potter Again
1.40 Mithras
2.10 Sunny Bay

GOING: Good.
1 Left-hand race with imposing drop fences and run-in of two furlongs.
2 Course is in form of 550 and 600 yards. ADVERTISEMENT: County Stand 24; Ladies Stand 24 (OAPs half-price); CAR PARK: Free.
3 LEADING TRAINERS: M Pigg 25 winners from 15 runners gives a success ratio of 216%.
4 RICHARDS: 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th 9th 10th 11th 12th 13th 14th 15th 16th 17th 18th 19th 20th 21st 22nd 23rd 24th 25th 26th 27th 28th 29th 30th 31st 32nd 33rd 34th 35th 36th 37th 38th 39th 40th 41st 42nd 43rd 44th 45th 46th 47th 48th 49th 50th 51st 52nd 53rd 54th 55th 56th 57th 58th 59th 60th 61st 62nd 63rd 64th 65th 66th 67th 68th 69th 70th 71st 72nd 73rd 74th 75th 76th 77th 78th 79th 80th 81st 82nd 83rd 84th 85th 86th 87th 88th 89th 90th 91st 92nd 93rd 94th 95th 96th 97th 98th 99th 100th 101st 102nd 103rd 104th 105th 106th 107th 108th 109th 110th 111th 112th 113th 114th 115th 116th 117th 118th 119th 120th 121st 122nd 123rd 124th 125th 126th 127th 128th 129th 130th 131st 132nd 133rd 134th 135th 136th 137th 138th 139th 140th 141st 142nd 143rd 144th 145th 146th 147th 148th 149th 150th 151st 152nd 153rd 154th 155th 156th 157th 158th 159th 160th 161st 162nd 163rd 164th 165th 166th 167th 168th 169th 170th 171st 172nd 173rd 174th 175th 176th 177th 178th 179th 180th 181st 182nd 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FOOTBALL

Francis' future in balance as Spurs hire Swiss coach

Tottenham Hotspur appear to have found a replacement for their underachieving manager, Gerry Francis.

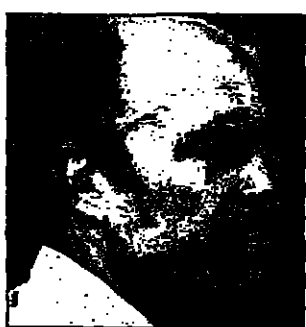
Christian Gross, a 43-year-old Swiss, is expected to take over next Monday as Spurs follow their London rivals Arsenal and Chelsea in going Continental. Nick Duxbury reports.

It is Gerry Francis' birthday two weeks on Saturday, but it is unlikely there will be much celebrating when it comes to blowing out the 46 candles on his cake. By then, Christian Gross, the coach of Zurich Grasshopper, will be settled in nicely at Tottenham Hotspur if reports coming from Switzerland yesterday are to be believed. The Grasshoppers president, Romano Spadaro, let it be known that the 43-year-old Gross will be ensconced at White Hart Lane on Monday, with his

Grasshopper assistant, Fritz Schmid, also there as his right-hand man.

It is not clear whether Francis - Tottenham's 13th manager since the war and the fifth in the last 10 years - will be leaving, or moving upstairs. He has come under extreme pressure as his team languish 16th in the Premiership and it would be surprising if he remained at Spurs in any capacity.

Francis, who took over Ossie Ardiles in November 1994, has been thwarted by injuries and what some fans had deemed to be expensive but ultimately disappointing signings. The Tottenham chairman, Alan Sugar,



Gross: Zurich coach

recently admitted that the £6m Les Ferdinand had been a purchase born out of panic rather than business sense.

Spadaro said that Gross, who was thought to be joining a German club, had signed a contract with the job title of head coach. His brief from Sugar will be simple - to bring the championship to White Hart Lane for the first time since Bill Nicholson in 1961.

Gross, who will become the first Swiss to coach in Britain, will find a friendly face on his arrival in the form of the former Grasshoppers defender Ramon Vega. Grasshopper coach since 1993, Gross has led the club to two successive championships, 1995 and 1996, and the 1994 Swiss Cup.

It was as ugly as they come, but Paul Bowell's tackle will not result in any punishment even though millions of television viewers saw the Feyenoord player stamp his studs into Dennis Irwin's knee.

If the Feyenoord-Manchester United Champions' League match had been under FA jurisdiction, Bowell's challenge would have landed him on a disciplinary charge even though the referee did not see the incident. The Dutch player, who described the tackle as "the biggest error of my career", escaped even a booking.

Too late for Irwin, who will be out at least until Christmas with ligament damage. Uefa, the governing body of European football, are now considering following the FA's lead in allowing the use of television evidence.

"It is not our policy to use television evidence and we are in line with Fifa [the game's world governing body] on that," a Uefa spokeswoman said. "We've never used it before, but that could change and at the moment it is under discussion."

United withdraw Salas offer

Manchester United are pulling out of their bid for the Chilean international Marcelo Salas, because his club will not reduce their £12m valuation.

Alex Ferguson, the United manager, wants the River Plate striker, but the Argentinian club have refused to come down on their asking price. River Plate are willing to sell, but it is all a question of timing. The club's president is up for reelection at the beginning of next month and stands little chance of success if he sells Salas now. The Argentinians are not prepared to haggle as they feel

they will find another buyer for Salas now or at the World Cup finals. For United's part, the pic board is unlikely to grant Ferguson the full £12m.

River Plate will want to be well compensated for the loss of Salas and reportedly value him at £18m. As United weigh up their options, they are aware other footballing giants such as Barcelona and Milan could also make an attractive offer.

Salas has achieved hero status in Chile since he broke into the national team two years ago.

- Alan Nixon

TENNIS



Mary Pierce, of France, plays a backhand during her 6-3, 6-4 victory against Belgium's Sabine Appelmans in the first round of the season-ending Chase Championships in Madison Square Garden in New York

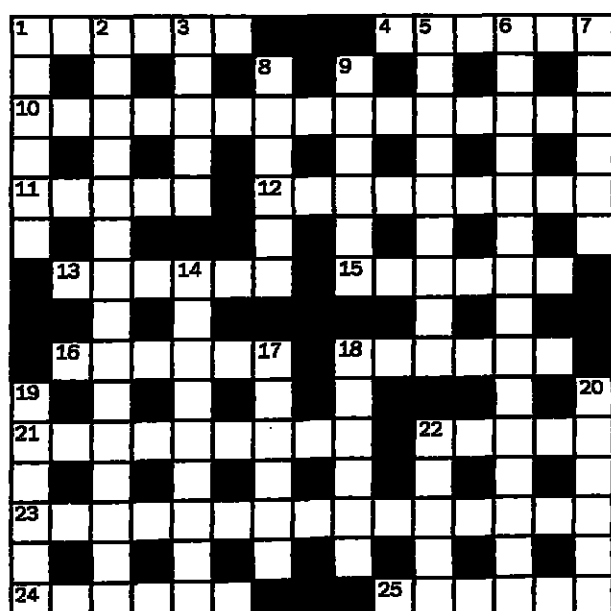
Report, page 30; Photograph: Stan Honda/AFP

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3460, Wednesday 19 November

By Aquila

Wednesday's solution



DECORATE PSYCHIC
A O E H
IGNITION SPHERE
S D C R S U W R
YOUTH HOUSING
C O U C W
HOTEL GOLFHOUSE
A U O R E V
INVISIBLE EXPLO
N E T R O I C
CHEESE CLOTH
I E A D W L G O
SODIUM NINEARIS
L G S R A A E
ELEVEN SITUATION

ACROSS

- 1 Damage to church is rare (6)
- 4 Grim, at university, to be strapped (4,2)
- 10 Late gathering in the Slav five-star resort (7,5)
- 11 Wanting to be seen near the batsman (5)
- 12 Snags when mystical symbols lose power? (9)
- 13 These days, simply acclimatize (6)
- 15 Agent holds Kipling's novel to be inadequate (6)
- 16 Engraver dips top of chisel in solvent (6)
- 18 Pinkie more elegant when curled around end of mug? (6)
- 21 Soothing effect of lemon tile mosaic (9)

- 22 Boring machine that switches Anglo-French articles (5)
- 23 Top fuzz causing blotches in faces to break out? (5,10)
- 24 Gems for investors (6)
- 25 Advocate keeping wicket in Orpington, say? (6)

DOWN

- 1 Division of church leaders in new isms? (6)
- 2 Work of quality controllers to help the airways (3-12)
- 3 Take for a ride in cycle-race section (5)
- 5 Ear care (9)
- 6 How we are evolving, happening to band together? (15)
- 7 European bull (6)

- 8 Architect showing the way in the city (6)
- 9 Civets roaming the Isle of Wight, once? (6)
- 14 Injured hen, full up, is not profitable (9)
- 17 Putting up drink approved for a native of southern Africa (6)
- 18 Made of iron, this new talisman (6)
- 19 Offers, say, the old kingdom? (6)
- 20 One's unusually in credit as user of blue-pencil (6)
- 22 Beast of Burden, a Broadway production put up (5)

RUGBY LEAGUE

Wigan plan to ground-share with football neighbours Athletic by year 2000

Wigan plan to be playing in the new ground they will share with their neighbours, Wigan Athletic, by the turn of Millennium. The club has confirmed that it will be moving in with the football team at the new 25,000-capacity stadium in the town in time for the start of the 2000 season.

Mike Nolan, the Wigan chairman, said yesterday that an alternative suggestion of playing on a different site in the town earmarked by the previous board, which was ousted last

month, was "all smoke and mirrors".

The Robin Park plan was "the only viable one," he said, allowing Wigan to remain at their Central Park home for another two years before the bulldozers move in to build a supermarket.

On the playing front, Wigan are close to signing the Hunter Mariners' captain and hooker,

Robbie McCormack. "He has agreed terms and it just a matter of completing the signing," Nolan said.

McCormack will join the London Broncos prop, Tony Mestrov, in a remodelled pack for next season, although Wigan have cooled on the deal to sign the New Zealand forward Mark Horo. Another New Zealander, the former All Black, John

Timu, is considering rival offers from Wigan and London.

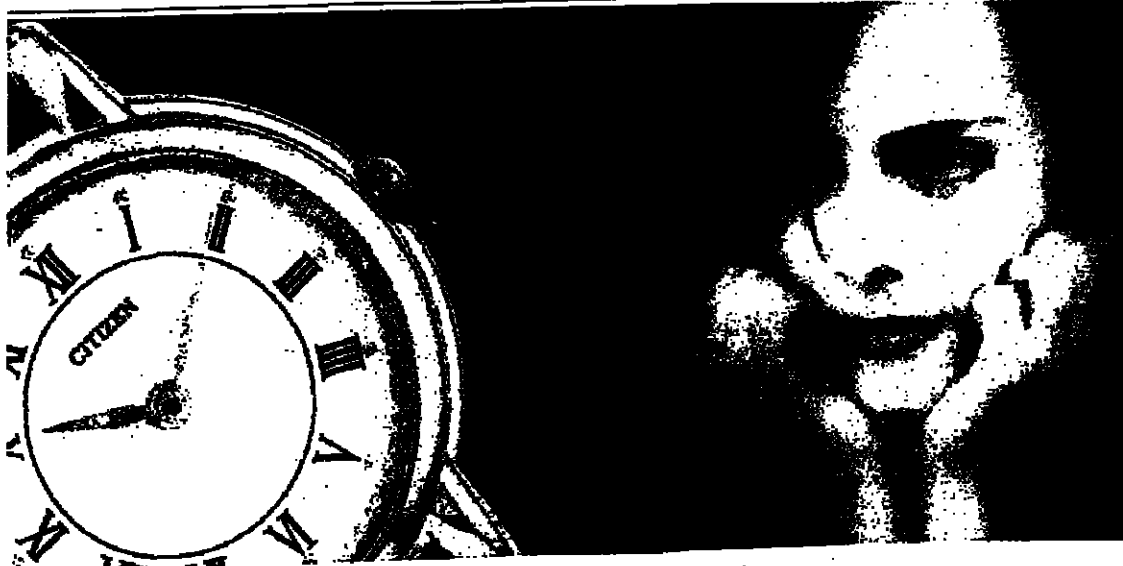
Meanwhile, the prop forward Lee Hansen, who Wigan signed from Widnes last season, is available if the right bid is forthcoming. It will not be decided which other players can go until their new coach, John Monie, runs a rule over the playing staff when he returns from Australia in December.

Wigan are not proposing to replace any of the four backroom staff made redundant last week.

Leeds, who are hoping to announce their new coach this week, have restructured the club by splitting rugby and non-rugby affairs into two sections.

● Rommy Martyn, the man of the match in the first Test at Wembley, has agreed a new three-year deal with Challenge Cup holders St Helens.

- Dave Hodfield



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